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‘Don’t Forget the Boys in Korea’: British Soldiers’ Experience of the Korean War 1950-1953.

Drew James Ryder M.A.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of
the requirements of the University of
Northumbria at Newcastle for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

Research undertaken in the Faculty of
Arts, Design & Social Sciences

February 2020.

Abstract

The experience of the British soldier throughout the Twentieth Century may seem to be well covered in new military histories, however there is a conspicuous gap in the literature. The Korean War is one of the most globally significant conflicts of the past century, over 80,000 British personnel served in Korea and 1,109 were lost or killed in action. Yet in the year of the conflict's 70th anniversary, the experience of the men who fought there has been largely overlooked. This thesis makes an important contribution to knowledge by examining the experiences of a previously unstudied cohort of British veterans who served on the frontlines of Britain's biggest 'Forgotten War'. By analysing oral testimonies and recollections, this study recentres the experience of individuals to its rightful place in the narratives of the Korean War and also sheds new light upon wider British Society in the mid-Twentieth Century. This in turn brings studies of the Korean War more into line with the wider body of new military histories. With the inclusion of material from men who served as Regulars and Reservists, as well as National Servicemen, this work also adds to existing scholarly work in the field which has focused predominantly on the experience of conscription. In doing so this research demonstrates firstly that the experience of men who fought in Korea is not uniform and does not fit neatly into either a Cold War narrative or as a continuation of the Second World War. Instead it shows that the experience of Korea could be reflective of the narratives of past conflicts whilst remaining a unique in its own right. Additionally, this thesis also shows how the Korean War never developed its own narrative tropes in popular memory and failed to make a lasting impression with wider post-war society. The most prominent theme of Korea in popular memory was that of being an archetypal 'Forgotten War', which this thesis shows, has also led to a reliance in veterans' recollections on comparison with other conflicts. This study also demonstrates that veterans of Korea were keenly aware of their collective status of being forgotten, which also plays into their reactions to the war and their identity. The agency of these men is made clear through their individual testimonies, showing that not all men who served in Korea did so reluctantly or without choice, and that they formed their own opinions and reactions to their situation. Thereby this work opens the door for an even greater understanding of the most significant conflict of the early post-war era, as well as a wider understanding of conflict throughout the Twentieth Century.

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Acknowledgements

I have always had a particular interest in the Korean War since my school days. When I first toyed with the idea of applying to study for a PhD, I noticed that the field of study dedicated to the experience of soldiers, which covered the World Wars extremely well, had somehow skipped over Korea and that the conflict's moniker of the 'Forgotten War' was very apt indeed in new military histories. So, with no small amount of hubris, I set out to see if I could help bring about even the smallest redress to this issue. I think it is fair to say that this proved to be much more difficult than I anticipated and there are many, many people that I need to thank for helping me get through this thesis. To express how much their help has meant would take up more pages than I can allow to be printed in good conscious. Naturally, I would first like to offer my sincerest thanks to Dr. Linsey Robb for being an outstanding supervisor and providing excellent guidance. I know the whole endeavour did not get off to the best start, but without your help I fear it would have stayed that way. For that I say thank you, and I wish yourself and your family the absolute best in all things to come. For the same reasons I must also thank my second supervisor Dr. James McConnel for all the help and support he too provided throughout my attempts to complete this work. I do not know how I could possibly write this acknowledgement, let alone the whole piece, without giving an enormous thank you to my amazing family. Mam, Dad and my incredible sister Vicky, thank you for supporting me through what has been the most difficult undertaking of my life. I do not know if I ever can show you how much your support has meant to me. I also want to thank my Gran and Grandad for the support they have both shown me, especially when I was so very close to quitting. Thank you also to Auntie Ali and Uncle Graham for your support, help and Monty Python based inspiration. Everything you guys have done for me has been incredible and again, I wouldn't have made it through without you. A thank you also goes out to my good friends, Aysha, Chris, James, Josh, Pip, as well as almost everyone at Teesside University Archery Club, the exceptions know who they are...I would also like to give a special thanks to the staff at North Tees and James Cook hospitals for keeping me going. I would also very much like to thank Miss Ellice Louise Jones. Ellie, when you read this, I want you to know that for all the reasons I started this work, you were the reason I made it to the end. Finally, I cannot continue without thanking the subjects of this study themselves, the soldiers and servicemen of the British Army who fought so far away from home all those years ago. Particularly to the late Ronnie Taylor, who will be very sorely missed.

-Drew J. Ryder

Author's Declaration:

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others. Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee. I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is: 81,024 words.

Name: Drew James Ryder.

Signature: Date:

28th October 2020.

Chapter 1: Introduction.

Private Maurice Micklewhite

In 1952, on a combat patrol between opposing lines in an unknown valley of the war-torn peninsula that was Korea, a nineteen-year-old private of the Royal Fusiliers known as Maurice Micklewhite, was engaged in what was one of the most significant post Second World War conflicts to date. Maurice Micklewhite, or Sir Michael Caine as he would be later known, is perhaps Britain's most famous veteran of the conflict that was the Korean War. Sir Michael, like many of Britain's celebrities from that generation, was a former National Serviceman and a veteran of overseas combat. When he appeared on *The Michael Parkinson Show* as part of a special one-off interview, it was unsurprising to hear amongst the witty anecdotes and jokes, a brief recollection from his time in the armed forces. What was surprising however, was the content of the story he told. It was not what one may expect from an old war story and it was certainly not a portrayal of events which would typically have been told from more well-known conflicts, such as the Second World War. However, what he did say has deep ramifications for any understanding of the war in Korea:

There were four of us, each one was dumber than the other one, the officer was bloody stupid, because he says to us, I'll give all of you a fiver if you go up the line, to the Chinese line and help take a prisoner. I said 'Up there? with you? Are you insane?' I said I'm already a mug enough. I was out there, fighting communism, for capitalism and I'm being paid four bob a day!¹

The audience laughed, but what appears on the face of it to be a simple anecdote for comic effect, is in fact a kind of witness testimony of his experience and one which can add a great deal to our understanding of the Korean War. Korea is not

¹ Sir Michael Caine, on his service in Korea, 'Michael Caine, Interview Part One- Parkinson- BBC', *BBC Studios, YouTube*, [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rZHaxm4rOuE>], last accessed 22nd November, 2019.

in the pantheon of Britain's great conflicts, like the World Wars, the Falklands or other such conflicts. That much is evident from the very fact that Sir Michael could tell his story so irreverently. Unlike the entrenched view society has developed of the World Wars, particularly the subject of combat, which must be approached with a reverent respect, Sir Michael was able to joke to an audience about his fighting experience. Would a typical soldier of the Second World War for example, have been able to tell an audience so openly, that they refused an order and were almost bribed to fight the Nazis? Would they even be willing to make a joke of the Allies fighting the Axis as Sir Michael did of 'capitalism fighting communism'? The fact is that Korea is simply not viewed in the terms usually applied to warfare in the Twentieth Century. Unlike the trenches of the First World War or events such as D-Day during the Second World War, there are no cultural tropes and relatable touchstones for Korea. For these reasons the Korean War is remarkable amongst Britain's Twentieth Century conflicts. Despite the ferocity with which it was fought and the fact that it was one of the defining conflicts for global politics in the Twentieth Century it is so often dubbed 'the Forgotten War' in popular media. It is not forgotten in the sense that it is unknown; the build-up to the war's outbreak, the tactical and strategic manner in which it was fought and the indelible impact it had on geopolitics, the Cold War and the situation in Korea today, have all been considered at length over the years. However, the conflict never developed any relatable cultural narratives, tropes or attachments in wider British society and with the exception of a notable few, the everyday boots on the ground experience of the soldiers who fought in the largest post Second World War conflict has been largely ignored. The result is that the narratives in soldiers' retellings is often dependant upon relation to other more well-known conflicts. In these cases, despite all the unique elements of the Korean War, veterans continually link their

experiences to what they believe are more relatable elements from other conflicts, from the environment to their personal circumstances. Some recounts do remain distinctly more centred around Korea, yet they are often more fluid and open to retelling even in terms of individual stories. When the story Sir Michael told on Parkinson was included in a written memoir, which came some years later, it had been remoulded and doubtless edited through several filters by the time it reached publication and serialisation on BBC Radio 4:

The closest I got to death and it is an incident which still haunts my dreams from time to time, was a night time observation patrol in no man's land. Three of us, my Platoon Commander, Robert Mills, a wireless operator and me. We were sent down the valley, faces blackened with mud and covered in mosquito repellent, right up to the Chinese lines. It was Madness [...] Bobby Mills, who was the son of a General, had an idea, 'I know' he said, 'We'll grab ourselves a Chinese prisoner! I'll give you a fiver each!' 'Are you off your fucking head?!' I hissed back.²

There were three people instead of four, more specifics were given and the language was decidedly bluer, however, the general semantics of the experience remained. This demonstrates that even with the inconsistencies in objective details or exact records, which can occur as memories change, individual's understandings of the experience generally remain the same. Through the ways in which veterans retell their experiences, it is still possible to find an understanding of an individual's experience as they themselves saw it. That is the power of oral testimony and life writing. It has the capacity to reveal individual experience in a way that adds to understanding, because it does not just tell us what happened, but what people thought about what was happening and how they remember it. The Korean War is an historical event which remains sorely underexplored in these terms. While Sir Michael Caine may be irregular in that he was the only soldier of the Korean War to become a major Hollywood star, able to give his

² Michael Caine, *The Elephant to Hollywood, The Autobiography*, (Edinburgh 2010), PP. 54- 55.

testimony before a live audience and national television, Maurice Micklewhite, the National Serviceman from a working-class background serving his year in Korea was not. The young National Serviceman was typical of the British soldiers who saw active duty on the Korean peninsula.

Course of the War

The broad strokes of the conflict are relatively simple to follow. The war itself began at dawn on the 25th of July 1950. With heavy Soviet and Chinese backing, North Korean, (DPRK), armed forces crossed the border which lay along the 38th Parallel with overwhelming numbers; the armed forces of South Korea, (RoK), were decimated, losing nearly 80,000 troops in less than a week.³ The United Nations Security Council reacted by issuing Resolution 83, signalling that North Korea was in breach of world peace and called for an urgent military police action to push DPRK forces back to the 38th Parallel.⁴ From there, the war followed three major stages. First was the breakout and a rapid 'roll back' of the overstretched North Korean Forces. This stage of the war was highly mobile and saw large scale engagements reminiscent of the events of the Second World War. This included the Battle of Incheon, which was a larger amphibious assault than even the Normandy landings of June 1944. The second phase of the war began in the winter of 1950, with Allied forces nearing their border, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), began a massive counter attack, which saw UN forces pushed back over the 38th Parallel. Seoul, the Southern capital, changed hands many times. Ultimately, due to defensive actions such as those at the Battle of the Imjin and Kapyong, the PLA was unable to effectively rout UN forces and following

³ 'The Korean War: The Outbreak, *The United States Army Centre For Military History*, [<https://web.archive.org/web/20100612073344/http://www.history.army.mil/brochures/KW-Outbreak/outbreak.htm>], Archived 12th June 2010, last accessed, 29th September 2019.

⁴ 'United Nations Document S/RES/83(1950)' [[https://undocs.org/S/RES/83\(1950\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/83(1950))].

weeks of attacks and counterattacks, the frontlines again stabilised around the 38th Parallel. This time, UN forces implemented a policy of holding the line along the 38th parallel as originally stated in Resolution 83, rather than pressing home the attack and as a result the next stage of the war was hallmarked by a long stalemate which lasted until the ceasefire of 1953. An armistice agreement finally came into effect on the 27th of July 1953, with a ceasefire sounded by buglers of the Durham Light Infantry. Officially, there was no cessation of hostilities and technically, the conflict remains unresolved to this day. The fighting between June 1950 and July 1953 led to nearly 4 million deaths on both sides, the vast majority were civilian.⁵ However, unlike the World Wars, the Vietnam conflict or even the Falklands War, the fighting that occurred in Korea has largely faded from wider society's memories.

The outbreak of the Korean War was met with a spectrum of reactions amongst the British public and it was not immediately clear what British involvement in the conflict would look like. Worries about entangling the already war weary nation in another total war were common amongst the public. Similarly, early advice to the government suggested that the threat to British interests posed by the Korean situation was 'remote, indirect and not immediate'.⁶ Nonetheless, on the 5th of July, in line with the United Nations' resolution on the matter, Prime Minister Attlee first announced to the commons that Britain would be supporting the Republic of Korea, though this was initially limited to naval forces.⁷ Twenty-two Royal Navy

⁵ Ibid; 'Casualties of the Korean War', *Ministry of National Defence of Republic of Korea*, [https://web.archive.org/web/20130120040603/http://www.imhc.mil.kr/imhcroot/data/korea_view.jsp?seq=4&page=1], last accessed, 29th September 2019; Bruce Cummings, *The Korean War, A History*, (2011), P. 35

⁶ Mass Observation Archive (Henceforth MOA), 9-1-A, Public Opinions of the Korean War, June – July 1950; Bodleian Library, MS Attlee 103.7, Foreign Office Memorandum 'Korea', 1st July 1950.

⁷ Hansard, House of Commons Debate (Henceforth HC Deb), Vol. 477, cols. 486- 596, 5/07/1950.

vessels already in the Far East region, including the aircraft carrier HMS Triumph and two battleships, HMS Belfast and HMS Jamaica, were rapidly dispatched to the Sea of Japan to provide naval and air support to United Nations forces.⁸ This was swiftly followed by an initial commitment of 27,000 British troops, including the hastily assembled 29th Brigade, however, the true number of troops that ended up fighting in Korea was much higher. Due to a lack of official statistics from both the government and the British Army, estimates of the true number of British troops who served in Korea vary massively, generally somewhere between 40,000 and over 100,000.⁹ Sir Anthony Farrar-Hockley, in his official history of the War put the number at 81,084, however it is unclear whether he included Commonwealth forces in that count.¹⁰ In any case, the British Army would go on to experience some of the bitterest fighting of the post Second World War period and lost at least 1078 soldiers in battle. The average British Soldier of the Korean War is a difficult concept to characterise individually. The troops who arrived in Korea came from many backgrounds and had varying levels of military experience. Some were seasoned veterans of the Second World War, many of whom but not all, were non-commissioned officers and officers. Some were volunteers or reservists and still more were National Servicemen, with no prior experience of frontline combat. The latter group was so significant for the Korean War that it has often been framed as a 'National Serviceman's war'. As with so many elements of the conflict, it is dependent upon contexts such as the time and place in question, however regardless of how one looks at it, the National Service contribution to Britain's war

⁸ 'British Commonwealth Naval Operations During the Korean War – Part VII', *Royal United Services Institution Journal*, 99:593, (1954), P. 102.

⁹ Grace Huxford, *The Korean War in Britain, Citizenship, Selfhood and Forgetting*, (Manchester, 2018), P. 2 & P. 22; 'Britain's Forgotten War', *BBC News*, 20/4/2001, [<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/1285708.stm>], last accessed 4th April 2019.

¹⁰ Anthony Farrar-Hockley, *The British Part in the Korean War, Volume II, An Honourable Discharge*, (London, 1995), P. 420.

effort was significant. Some estimates of the National Service contribution to Britain's forces in Korea place the number of men at up to sixty per cent of some battalions.¹¹ Similarly, estimates of the total number of National Servicemen in Korea as a whole would place the figure at around 20,000 individual soldiers.¹² Therefore, throughout the entire war, just under half of the British contingent was composed of National Servicemen, so whilst not quite a majority, it is easy to understand how their place in the conflict has become so prominent.¹³ Regardless of a soldier's status in the army, be it National Serviceman, reservist or volunteer, any man deployed to Korea was supposed to have been in service for 12 months, be over nineteen years old and, after the 29th Division, be volunteers.¹⁴ They fought in diverse military scenarios, practically a world away from home, but for the most part the experience of those who engaged in the largest post-war conflict has been largely overlooked, under-analysed and remains absent from the narrative of Korea and Twentieth Century warfare.

Methodology

Yet for the men themselves who fought on the far-flung peninsula, Michael Caine included, their experiences are anything but forgotten. Many of these men have in fact, recorded their oral testimony and what these records provide has implications not just for the history of the Korean War, but also for much wider investigations into Twentieth Century military history. This study seeks to explore and frame the experience of these men, through a rigorous analysis of oral testimonies from the soldiers themselves. Aside from simply bringing the techniques of oral history to

¹¹ Trevor Royale, *The Best Years of Their Lives: The National Service Experience 1945-63*, (London, 1989), PP. 186- 187.

¹² Jason Timothy Fensome, 'The Administrative History of National Service in Britain, 1950- 1963' (PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2001), P. 15.

¹³ Richard Vinen, *National Service: Conscription in Britain, 1945- 1963*, (London, 2014), P. 286.

¹⁴ G. Huxford, *The Korean War in Britain*, P. 79.

new ground, there is much to be discovered about the Twentieth Century soldier beyond Korea. This is firstly because oral testimonies from Korea veterans are still relatively untouched in academic discourse and provide us with fresh evidence with which to approach the study of warfare. Secondly, because the Korean War did not develop such a strong cultural narrative as other conflicts, veterans of the war continually rely upon referencing and framing their experiences within the context of other conflicts, revealing both new information on Korea and at the same time fresh perspectives on the narratives of other conflicts. Essentially, we discover what the men who fought in the 1950s perceived of both their own situation and what they perceived to be of similar context from other wars. Thirdly, veterans of Korea are not constrained by expectations associated with their own conflicts narrative. To again reflect back on Michael Caine's interview with Michael Parkinson, the context of Korea allows us to see talking points about conflict generally which are obscured in the context of other wars. The social and political implications of the First and Second World Wars, for example preclude a great deal of discussion of many critical aspects of a soldier's experience. These conflicts have become far more entrenched in British culture, to the extent that many aspects therein have become almost sanctified. The narrative of the great struggle against fascism would make publicly recounting a story of disobeying a direct order and even floating the idea of needing a bribe to fight the Nazis a very taboo subject in an interview about fighting in the Second World War. Similarly, there is an expected reverence to other areas of the World Wars. Whilst joking about life on the frontlines of Korea may be perfectly acceptable, Michael Caine's story, told as a joke but which ended in brutal close combat, would raise eyebrows if it were from the First World War trenches.¹⁵ However, because of the lack of

¹⁵ M. Caine, *The Elephant to Hollywood*, PP. 55- 56.

attention paid towards Korea, Michael Caine was able to tell this story openly on a national talk show. This will also allow us to see for instance, the opinions on the conflict of men who were conscripted into National Service, without the due expectations that the war they were enlisted for was as vital to national survival as the World Wars. Similarly, there are other elements of taboo which are overcome such as the act of killing. As it will be shown, men who fought in Korea spoke of killing the enemy there with far less reservation than those who had fought in European wars. They viewed their enemy differently, for many various reasons. This was a view predicated on the fact that the North Korean and Chinese soldiers they faced were in many ways alien to the British troops. This was a multi-faceted view, predicated on race, the politics of the war and the circumstances in which the majority of fighting took place. Unlike the relatable enemies of the World Wars' Western Fronts, the view which emerged of the Chinese and North Koreans was one of an impersonal enemy combatant, with no emotional connotations. All these factors combined resulted in recollections of combat which allow us to see more clearly the experience of soldiers regarding the act of killing generally, without their perceived social reservations.¹⁶ Additionally, there is an extent to which the forgotten nature of the war, or at least its perception, allows veterans to give oral testimonies in more individual detail than one who had fought in a more well-known conflict. They go further to tell their own stories but also relate them to what they believe the listener may know. A soldier who fought at Normandy can just brush off the details as they believe them to be well known, but a soldier who fought in the Pusan breakout will explain more clearly what the situation was like. What this all demonstrates is that this study, though focused on a lesser known

¹⁶ Juliette Pattinson, *Behind Enemy Lines: Gender, Passing and the Special Operations Executive in the Second World War*, (Manchester, 2001).

conflict, can indeed reveal important elements of soldier's experience in a wider field of oral histories.

Oral history itself has been the primary and ideal methodology of studying under-represented and disregarded groups in the historical narrative since the late 1970s and as a result it is now a main focus of new military history. Interviews and materials collected from these unrepresented groups, in this case, Korean War veterans, present many new angles and narratives from those more typically recorded at the time. Official unit diaries for example, may report the daily activities of a company, but they cannot reflect the opinions and emotions of the average infantrymen and the only way to acquire this information is to seek an oral history approach. Despite the prominence of oral history over the last forty years, one of the main criticisms it faces is still that oral history, by its subjective nature, can never provide any kind of objective truth. It is argued that the way in which subsequent and personal experiences have shaped, twisted and altered memory make individual recollections and accounts overly biased reflections of the past and are therefore dubiously reliable as sources at best. Whilst the notion that oral history sources are indeed subject to the rigours of memory, to use this as a criticism of analysis rather misses the point. The line was drawn under this as far back as 1979, with Luísa Passerini's 'Work, Ideology and Consensus Under Italian Fascism', which summarised oral history not as a venture in finding facts and 'objective truths', but as an 'expression and representation of culture'.¹⁷ As Ron Grele put it, oral history tells us 'not just what happened, but what people thought happened and how they internalise what happened'.¹⁸ In short, oral history is not about precise objective details and more to do with what and how the interview

¹⁷ Luísa Passerini, 'Work, Ideology and Consensus Under Italian Fascism', *History Workshop Journal*, 8:1, (1979), P.84.

¹⁸ Ronald Grele, *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History*, (New York, 1991), P. 245.

subjects felt about their own personal experiences and their reflections upon it. It can indeed uncover new evidence, but it can also, with careful analysis, provide us with a richer and more profound understanding of the past and how it is remembered culturally. It should also be said to this point that the intrinsic nature of memory to oral history has in fact given rise to an entire sub-discipline within the wider scope of oral history itself. There are more culturally centred studies, that is to say works which focus on the experience of individuals with little heed paid to memory other than to note its natural bias, such as Elizabeth Robert's *A Woman's Place*, or more specific to recent military history, Emma Newland's work *Civilians Into Soldiers*.¹⁹ However there are also works which approach memory head on such as Daniel James's *Dona Maria's Story*, which explores the mannerisms of memory and how their analysis can lead to a better understanding of how experiences are remembered.²⁰ This study will for the most part follow the former of these patterns, accepting that there are of course natural biases in memory, but holding that this does not take away from their value as sources. Some mention must be given at this point to the debate against the use of oral history to understand the past, generally these criticisms of the discipline stem from a distrust of memory as a reliable source and from a worry of 'overly democratising' history towards underrepresented groups such as women, workers and minority groups.²¹ However, these are issues which have been long settled in the general consensus of oral history which has, since its revival in the 1970s, simply accepted that memory can be problematic from an objectivist stand point, but that it does not

¹⁹ Elizabeth Roberts, *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working Class Women, 1890-1940*, (Oxford, 1984); Emma Newlands, *Civilians into Soldiers, War, The Body and British Army Recruits, 1939-45*, (Manchester, 2014).

²⁰ Daniel James, *Dona Maria's Story: Life History, Memory and Political Identity*, (London, 2000).

²¹ A. Thomson, M. Frisch & P. Hamilton, 'The Memory and History Debates: Some International Perspectives', *Oral History* 22:2, (1994), PP. 33- 43.

degrade the value of the source for analysis. In short, whatever debate there was, is long since settled.

One of the first obstacles in examining the experience of the soldier in Korea is that the war has relatively little source material associated with it in comparison to the earlier conflicts of the Twentieth Century. In many ways, this is unsurprising, the Korean War, despite being a major conflict in its own right, was a fraction of the scale of the Second World War. Although a number as high as a hundred thousand British troops may have served in Korea, over three-million men saw active deployment between 1939 and 1945.²² Serving in the Second World War was a mass phenomenon. Even those who served at home in military or civilian roles played a part in the eventual allied victory.

This was not true of Korea, which simply never received the same level of attention as directed to the World Wars, both in popular culture and memory but also in terms of the collection of archival material and so relatively fewer efforts were made to record information in the same scale.²³ Despite this there are indeed excellent resources that provide avenues of investigation into the lives of the men who fought in Korea. There are of course, the usual unit diaries and personal papers in the Imperial War Museum and various regimental museums as would exist for the World Wars, however, these sources have severe limitations and problems for a study of this kind. Firstly and perhaps as a result of the overshadowed nature of Korea in proceeding decades, these kinds of documents were simply not retained in the same quantities and exist in far smaller numbers

²² 'How Have UK Armed Forces Personnel Numbers Changed Over Time', *The Guardian Data Blog*, [<https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2011/sep/01/military-service-personnel-total>], last accessed 16th December 2019.

²³ A quick search of the Imperial War Museum catalogue demonstrates this, returning over 41,810 and 32,435 results for the First and Second World Wars respectively, but only 5,034 items associated with the Korean War.

as their counterparts from other conflicts, insufficiently so for this kind of study on their own.²⁴ In instances where these letters do exist, they primarily represent only a fractional cross section of the British Army contingent deployed to Korea, mostly officers ranging from Lieutenant upwards. Unit diaries, where they are available, tell very different stories from personal diaries, which were forbidden as an intelligence risk for soldiers in Korea. Unit diaries from Korea for the most part contain only the day to day administrative records for their subjects, vehicle requisitions and deployment orders are noted, but the everyday lives of the battalion's men are either absent or only marginally included. These sources are certainly valuable, but a far richer and larger pool of resources are available in the form of oral histories. The primary archival source from which this study is drawn is the extensive oral histories collection of the sound archive of the Imperial War Museum. As a part of the museum's continuing project of recording and digitising the recollections of those who experienced warfare, over 268 individual recorded interviews of Korean War veterans can be found in the IWM's digitised archive at the time of writing. These interviews were mostly collected by the IWM between the years of 1985 and 2006, however there are individual recordings that exist beyond these dates, going as far back as 1970 and forward to 2012. Of course, whilst this represents a fraction of the number who fought in Korea and no oral history collection can ever fully represent such a large number of people, the interviews do include a wide range of men from across the range of ranks, ages and personal histories. From National Servicemen at the minimum age to deploy to Korea, to older and experienced troops, reservists, non-commissioned and commissioned officers with previous service. These soldiers came from across

²⁴ Again, a similar search refined to only return diaries, private papers and associated documents, only found 31 items relating to Korea at all, as opposed to 2073 for the Second World War.

Britain and were from diverse social backgrounds. Most of these men were seasoned career soldiers, others National Servicemen, some were from affluent backgrounds, others joined the army straight from borstals. This is significant because it allows a wider image of Korea than the assumption that it was mostly a National Serviceman's War. The views of National Servicemen are indeed represented, but so too are the voices and recollections of Regular soldiers and Reservists who may not have shared the same experiences or held the same views and opinions as National Servicemen. That being noted, the IWM's specific research agenda at the time of collecting these recordings was not to singularly record the experiences of the men who fought in Korea. Reflecting this, the interviews themselves, are primarily concerned with recording the chronological events of a subject's career, rather than personal experience and emotional reaction. Yet, there is an extent to which these elements are somewhat beneficial. For a start, it means that veteran's emotional responses and stories of their experience are not directed by the interviewer in the same manner as if they had been the precise agenda of the interview. Similarly, the importance of personal experience to the interviewees, is such that it still shines through. A further advantage of the IWM archive was that it precluded the need to conduct fresh interviews for this study. The collection of such a large body of fresh interviews would not only have been tremendously difficult and intensive in terms of time and resources, but would have also brought all of the issues associated with conducting then interpreting one's own interview. Coming to the IWM archive from an external point of view allowed for the analysis of the sources from a more impartial stand point. There was no way to probe for a deeper meaning or to seek the answer one may have wanted to hear; the recordings exist as they exist. This allowed the study to be focused far more on the analysis of material, rather than its

collection. Hundreds of hours of material and recordings from the Imperial War Museum's digitised sound archive have been analysed, as well as recordings from the National Army Museum's sound archive and transcripts of veteran interviews have been extensively analysed.²⁵ Additionally, reference has also been made to veteran's memoirs and life writing, such as the work done by David Green and Ron Larby.²⁶ Although these works, which will be discussed further, do not represent a perfect window into the universal experience of the British soldier, if such a thing exists, but they can help support oral testimony in various ways. They represent a more polished and filtered version of the same personal stories as come through in oral testimonies, further helping to shed light onto the experience of troops. Through rigorous examination and analysis of all these sources, this work will demonstrate what the experience of the Korean War was for the men who fought there. It will demonstrate that the conflict, for British soldiers, was a distinct entity, with its own peculiarities and continuities in experience. It will also show that life for the British soldier on the ground was more centred on day to day activities and smaller parts of life than grand Cold War narratives and strategic elements of old military history.

Literature

Obviously, this research does not stand alone and there has developed in recent decades, an impressive body of 'new military histories', upon the shoulders of which this work stands. The use of oral histories, life writing and recovery history in this body of work is anything but new, having been the prevalent approach to

²⁵ Stephen Kelly, *British Soldiers of the Korean War in Their Own Words*, (Briscombe Port, 2013), is an edited collection of transcripts of interviews with veterans of Korea, which has been used in support of other materials.

²⁶ David Green, *Captured at the Imjin, The Korean War Memoirs of a Gloster 1950- 1953*, (Barnsley, 2003); Ron Larby, *Signals to the Right, Armoured Corps to The Left*, (Leamington, Spa 1993).

academic military history for more than four decades. However, before moving on to cover the writings amongst which this study seeks to place itself, it should be considered that although there has been little of this new school academic discourse regarding the Korean War specifically, the conflict has been subject to study in more traditional terms. Histories of the Korean War have generally been more in line with the typically empirical narratives of older schools of military studies, or what Robert Citino termed 'Drum and Trumpet' writings.²⁷ For the most part, these have been almost entirely centred on strategic studies, the causes of the war and its place within wider geopolitics of the Twentieth Century. These works usually start with an examination of the war's causes, tracing them from the Japanese occupation of Korea, to the Allies' trusteeship post 1945, to the invasion of the South by the North in 1950. Some of the most notable authors in this tradition are Max Hastings, Bruce Cummings and General Sir Anthony Farrar-Hockley, who wrote the official history of the War in the 1990s.²⁸ Hastings work in particular is considered an excellent overview of the entire conflict, examining the war from its origins, through the major stages of the conflict and into the peace process. However, comparatively little attention is given to the experience of the troops who were fighting the battles detailed, except to give minor context or background. In all, these works form a very top down, commander's eye view of the Korean War. Even Farrar-Hockley's comparatively late official work was more in keeping with older military narratives, detailing the high politics behind the war and military manoeuvres, rather than reflecting the experience of men on the

²⁷ Robert Citino, 'Military Histories, Old and New: A Reintroduction', *The American Historical Review*, 112:4, (2007), PP.1070- 1090.

²⁸ Max Hastings, *The Korean War*, (London 1987); B. Cummings, *The Korean War*, (2011); Anthony Farrar- Hockley, *The British Part in the Korean War, Volume I, A Distant Obligation*, (London, 1990); Anthony Farrar- Hockley, *The British Part in the Korean War, Volume II*.

ground. All in all, like most of the older school of military histories, these works are perfectly serviceable to give an impression of what happened in Korea, but do very little to explain what it was actually like for soldiers. This was predominantly the case with almost all military history, until a new school of thought emerged.

Early major works in new military history came in the 1970s, with authors who sought to go beyond the 'drum and trumpet' commander's tales of old military history and place the experience of the individual service person at the centre of the narrative.²⁹ Historians such as John Keegan, John Ellis and Eric Leed began examining and analysing the first-hand accounts of soldiers and they helped to give rise to a sea change in military studies. Keegan's *Face of Battle* and Ellis's later *The Sharp End* are still regarded as relevant and hugely significant, as well as moving pieces in the field of soldier's experience.³⁰ These works were followed by others such as Eric Leed who similarly reevaluated the position of aspects of individual experience and interwove them into narratives of various conflicts.³¹ The innovation these authors made, was to take an oral history approach to first-hand accounts from what they described as 'the poor bloody infantry' and develop a picture of their experience.³²

Their key findings were that the old school narrative of military history was simply inadequate to explain the daily experience of the infantryman. By taking a new approach, they found that soldiers' experiences were often defined by their separation from home, the proximity of death, the closeness of comradeship and the ambivalence of society to their experience. None of these factors were present

³⁰ John Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and The Somme*, (London 1976); John Ellis, *The Sharp End: The Fighting Man in World War II*, (London 1980).

³¹ Eric Leed, *No man's land, Combat & Identity in World War 1*, (Cambridge, 1979).

³² J. Ellis, 'Reflections on the *Sharp End of War*', in Paul Addison & Angus Calder (eds.), *Time to Kill, The Soldier's Experience of War in the West, 1939- 1945*, (London, 1997), P. 13.

in old top down narratives, as Keegan put it, 'There was nothing about rum, or nervous breakdowns, or bullying in Clausewitz'.³³ In the broadest terms, what this research hopes to accomplish is to do for the infantryman's experience of the Korean War, what these works did for the infantry of the First and Second World War. At present, there is very little in terms of new military history applied to the Korean War, with the exception of Grace Huxford's *The Korean War in Britain*, which focused primarily on wider society. As such, there has been no other work which has focused specifically into the context of British Soldiers who fought in Korea. In these terms, this study is unique and more importantly, opens up tremendous new ground for further expanding oral historical investigation into the Korean War and other such 'forgotten' conflicts.

Of course, there are also other developments in the field of new military history which this work stands alongside and adds to in more specific ways.

One of the key authors in areas of military history pertinent to this study is Joanna Bourke, whose work expanded the field to explore notions of identity, emotion, masculinity and interpersonal relationships throughout the First and Second World Wars and the Vietnam War.³⁴ Bourke produced works which showed a graphic and unromanticised view of life for men on active military service. One of the key additions Bourke made was to recentre the act of killing as a characteristic element of frontline experience. The ways in which men responded to and coped with intimate killing were central to military service and could be as bloody and horrific as the act of killing itself. This study builds upon Bourke's conclusions in several ways. It will demonstrate that the act of fighting and killing was indeed central to soldiers' experiences of the Korean War, though it will also show that the

³³ J. Keegan, 'Towards a Theory of Combat Motivation', in *ibid*, P. 4.

³⁴ Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male, Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, (London, 1996); J. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing, Face to Face with Killing in the Twentieth Century*, (London, 1999).

day to day coping mechanisms of troops were far more mundane and everyday than some of Bourke's findings. Similarly, as will be shown, the act of killing itself, whilst central to the experience, seems to have been far more impersonal for veterans of Korea than in Bourke's examinations of the World Wars. Of course, killing was not the only area of military life which was expanded upon by new military history and alongside Bourke, came several other works which began to examine and analyse emotional responses and masculinities in soldiers. One of the key arguments of Bourke's work is with regards to masculinity and how military experience was often starkly different from the expected understandings of masculinity at the time. This study will similarly show that in the social environment of Korea, soldiers also took to caring for each other in 'mothering' or otherwise parental ways as part of the coping mechanisms of daily life. The social life of soldiers in Korea, between each other and their families at home, was just as much a part of life as their prescribed military routine. Other works have also investigated this social and masculine aspect of life in different groups during wartime. In 2008 Martin Francis's work *The Flyer*, tackled the experience of a group which was very well represented in their wartime narrative, the RAF airman of the Second World War.³⁵ Francis developed a fully rounded analysis based around the daily, personal and domestic lives of aircrew, as well as the traditional considerations given to military service. He concluded that the relationship between the 'flyer' and fear, aggression, loss and other elements of life reveal ambiguities between the reality of everyday experience and the expected understandings of masculinity.

One of the key factors in the experience of the Korean War was the process of the war being forgotten. As Leed covered the ambivalence of society to the post-war

³⁵ Martin Francis, *The Flyer, British Culture and the Royal Air Force, 1939- 1945*, (Oxford 2008).

veteran, this work has found that the same occurred for the veterans of Korea.³⁶ This part of the study looks more closely at the post-war representation of Korea and the veterans who fought there. Similar oral history studies exist covering the cases of other groups whose representation is not aligned with their post-conflict experiences. Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird, whose work *Contesting Home Defence*, examined amongst other things, the memories of men and women who served with the Home Guard and how they were represented throughout the Second World War and beyond.³⁷ Whereas Summerfield and Peniston-Bird found that popular memory has indeed reflected public attitude towards the Home Guard, this study will demonstrate that popular memory became almost completely detached from the experience of the soldiers who fought in Korea. Similarly, in terms of representation, Linsey Robb, Juliette Patterson and Arthur McIvor's work, *Men in Reserve*, found that the image of the 'soldier hero' of the Second World War overshadowed and challenged the experience of civilian workers. This study found that the same effect was felt by the younger generation of men who would become the main body of soldiers fighting in Korea. Of course, many soldiers in Korea had previously fought in the Second World War, however, National Servicemen and newer recruits, continuously framed their experiences in relation to the mythos emanating from previous conflicts. This became increasingly evident in the years since the conflict, in which Korea veterans struggled to find recognition amongst the remembrance dedicated to the World Wars.

It may be evident that what now exists is a wide field of work dissecting service persons' experiences, encompassing virtually every aspect of the individual in

³⁶ E. Leed, *No man's land*.

³⁷ Penny Summerfield & Corinna Peniston-Bird, *Contesting Home Defence, Men, Women and the Home Guard in the Second World War*, (Manchester 2007).

many conflicts.³⁸ However, despite the disparate nature of the field, the experience of British Soldiers in Korea remains almost completely unexplored. One of the few historians who has covered British troops in Korea is Grace Huxford, whose work on the Korean War in Britain explores the social and cultural impact of the conflict on British society and in particular the effect of soldiers being sent to fight in the conflict so shortly after the Second World War had ended.³⁹ Huxford's work used a wide range of sources, including Mass Observation reports and even an examination of the Imperial War Museum's sound archive to study the wider impact of the war on British society. Huxford was able to chart the perception of the conflict in British popular perception in the first true social history of the Korean War demonstrating the place of the conflict in a more apathetic light than its reputation in the Cold War narratives would hold. However, the primary focus of Huxford's works is upon wider British culture and society as opposed to the frontline experiences of British soldiers. This study instead looks at similar trends from the other side of the world, examining the experience of the troops in Korea, rather than on the home front, for want of a better description. Additionally, this work will take a much closer look at the personal experience of the veterans in post-war society, rather than society itself. One of the important additions this study brings to the recent literature of the Korean War is the inclusion of testimonies from soldiers of various backgrounds and roles. Alongside the notion that the Korean War was a forgotten conflict, there is also a tendency to overemphasise the role played by National Servicemen in the conflict. This is a

³⁸ J. Bourke, 'New Military History', in M. Hughes & M. Philpot, (eds.), *Advances in Modern Military History*, (Basingstoke, 2006), P. 258.

³⁹ Grace Huxford, *The Korean War in Britain*; G. Huxford, 'The Korean War Never Happened: Forgetting a Conflict in British Society and Culture', *Twentieth Century British History*, 27:2, (2016), PP. 195- 219; G. Huxford, "'Write Your Life!' British Prisoners of War in the Korean War (1950- 1953) and Enforced Life Narratives', *Life Writing*, 12:1, (2015), PP. 3- 23.

trend which is not only present in popular narratives of the war, veterans publishing and even more recent historiography have tended to place a heightened emphasis on the presence of National Servicemen in Korea. This has led to what could be described as an overshadowing of the experiences of Regulars and Reservists who in fact made up the majority of the British contingent in Korea. This is not to undermine the significance of the contribution of National Servicemen to the war effort, rather it seeks to address the point that although Korea is often described as 'The National Serviceman's War', National Servicemen were in fact a minority in the conflict, albeit a sizable one.

In doing so this research differentiates itself from other recent pieces in the historiographic field of work, such as those by Grace Huxford and Vinen, in two key respects. Firstly, the otherwise excellent works produced by these authors is more focused on society in the UK through the paradigm of the National Serviceman in the Korean War. Their work, while addressing the individual experience of the soldier in Korea, uses it more for the perspective it gives of British society. The focus in both cases is not on the experiences of the soldier, but on life and society in 1950s Britain. While this work also uncovers important insights into wider British society in its course, its focus is far more on the soldiers themselves serving in Korea, rather than society on the home front. This is a significant addition to the body of literature on the Korean War as it is the first such work to centre first and foremost on the experience of the individual soldier in Korea. Moreover, by looking more widely at a cross section of British soldiers from across society and of different statuses within the army, this study further highlights the individual experiences of these men and reveals to a greater extent their own agency, opinions and reactions to the conflict in which they fought. By acknowledging Regular and Reservist soldiers, who made up the vast majority of

British participants in the Korean War, this work not only highlights that not all men fighting in Korea were there against their will, but it also directly challenges the notion that Korea was overwhelmingly a 'National Serviceman's war', which has somewhat clouded popular memories of the war and further undermined the memory and the significance of the contribution made by Regular and Reservists to the conflict. Additionally, by examining this wider cross section of troops, this study is able to give a much more diverse range of views and opinions than those pieces which focus on National Servicemen alone. Soldiers with previous experience of conflict for example, would naturally have different opinions of Korea than National Servicemen deploying for the first time.

A closer approximation for this study would be the work done by Emma Newlands. Newlands' book, *Civilians into Soldiers*, focused an oral history approach on the conscripts and recruits of the British Army during the Second World War.⁴⁰

Through the paradigm of the body, it followed the experiences of these recruits chronologically from their initial enlistment through the processes of training, which transformed civilians into active service soldiers and on to their confrontations with wounding, death, fear and the coping mechanisms developed along the way.

Newlands' work used many of the same approaches as this study, drawing upon the personal testimonies of soldiers, as well as official records and sources, to argue that even within the confines of training, the experience of the Second World War recruit was not a simple case of army regulations, drill and discipline, but was one in which men were able to pursue their own agendas, developed their own bodily reactions and coping mechanisms, in some cases, in spite of army doctrine. Many of the conclusions drawn by this study coincide with those made by Newlands. This is perhaps unsurprising, given how little time had passed in

⁴⁰ E. Newlands, *Civilians into Soldiers*.

between the focus of *Civilians into Soldiers* and the time of the Korean War. This study will detail how in those five years, little had changed in practical terms for the ways in which the British army trained its soldiers, despite attempts on paper to promote new ideologies and policies. Men were drilled, trained and disciplined in much the same way in 1950 as they had been in 1945, down to the same uniforms, equipment and in some cases, the same instructors. As may be expected, recruits responded in many of the same ways as described by Newlands. In the case of combat motivations and reactions to becoming National Servicemen, it may be expected that a fervour to fight the good fight in the Cold War, or liberate the nation of South Korea had become a key motivation, we instead see that just like the Second World War, individuals again pursued their own agendas and held their own interests.

Consideration should also be given to a smaller, but also important body of writing on the Korean War, which exists in the form of works created by veterans and former servicemen as chronicles of their own experience and the war in general. As will be explored later, a major aspect of the experience of Korea veterans after the war was their efforts to take ownership of their status of being 'forgotten'. With the formation of veterans' groups and societies in the 1980s such as the British Korean Veterans Association (BKVA), former soldiers sought to co-construct their own literary perspective to the histories of the war. This coincided with the growth of new military history literature and developed adjacent to it as a distinct body in its own right. Between published memoirs, such as David Green's *Captured at the Imjin* and Ron Larby's *Signals to the Right* and other documents and pieces

facilitated by the likes of the BKVA, the community of veterans has formed their own historiography of their experience.⁴¹

In some instances veterans' groups organised the collection of interview material, such as Stephen Kelly's book *British Soldiers Of the Korean War*, which exists as a collection of veteran's oral testimonies, similar to the BBC *People's War Project* and the Imperial War Museum's own collection of interviews.⁴² This body of veteran community writing has had a varied relationship with the body of academic history which developed alongside it. Some elements of it were created to provide additional context to older style military histories, existing as smaller parts of the grand narratives found in Hastings's and Farrar- Hockley's work.⁴³ Others, like Green, sought to explain and examine 'their Korea', often with reference to wider narratives, but importantly putting their own experience at the centre of the broader historical account.⁴⁴ The latter are particularly useful for studies like this one for exactly this reason. In attempting to reinsert their experiences into the narrative of what they perceive to be a forgotten war, veterans and their works provide a personal and candid voice that is relevant to this study, that being the experience of Korea as it was perceived by the soldiers themselves. The benefits of this are twofold: they open a window onto the soldiers' time in Korea itself as they remember it, whilst also detailing their experience of Korea becoming the 'forgotten war' in the narratives of subsequent years.

⁴¹ D. Green, *Captured at The Imjin River*; R. Larby, *Signals to the Right*.

⁴² S. Kelly, *British Soldiers of the Korean War*; 'World War 2 People's War: An Archive of World War Two Memories- Written By the Public, Gathered by the BBC', *BBC History*, [<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/>], last accessed 30th November 2018.

⁴³ Ted Stokes, 'Batman 1951- 1954: The Memoirs of a Squaddie', *Morning Calm, The Newsletter of the BKVA*, 65 (2011), P. 4

⁴⁴ D. Green, *Captured at The Imjin*, P. 106.

Chapter Summaries

The first chapter of this study, 'Life Before the Frontlines', explores soldiers' experiences before they reached the frontlines of the Korean Peninsula.

Importantly, this chapter examines the beginnings of military experience from the perspective of regular volunteers and reservists as well as National Servicemen to give a more rounded view of their lives in training in Post- Second World War Britain, and on to their deployment to Korea. Through the recollections of these men, this chapter sheds new light on army life and wider British society in the post-war years. It will also show that although fewer than five years had passed between the end of the Second World War and the British Army's deployment to Korea, there had supposedly been a significant shift in the ideological motivations behind the army's training regime, most notably with the implementation of National Service. In keeping with its post-war commitments, the army of the late 1940s and early 1950s sought to deliver a new generation of 'citizen soldiers', ready to serve in a new Cold War setting. This was a version of the notion subtly but significantly different from what had existed during the Second World War. This chapter examines the extent to which this change was merely political spin and how much it actually affected the experience of post-war training for the men themselves. Similarly, the differing initial reactions to joining the army will be explored, revealing wider post-war society's varying appetites for further conflict. One of the key points of this chapter demonstrates is that even within the mechanisms of recruitment and National Service, new soldiers still maintained a level of agency and had far more diverse opinions of army life than the narrative of mass recruitment may lead one to believe. Analysis of recollections shows that whilst there were indeed recruits and National Servicemen who were pessimistic about the prospect of putting their planned lives on hold for the sake of military

service, many individuals were happy to pursue the opportunities that army life provided. What stands out is the individuality and diversity of opinions on army life from National Servicemen, demonstrating that these men were primarily concerned with their own personal circumstances and agendas. This will show that amongst National Servicemen, there was little conformity to the patterns of the changes seen in post-war British Society and little fervour to become the army's idealised soldiers. Recalled reservists and former soldiers returning to the ranks were similarly out of step with overarching notions and ideals of service. Some soldiers voluntarily re-joined the army for their own personal reasons, but those who were forcefully recalled were largely unenthusiastic at the prospect of returning to army life. From this we shall see not only the personal experiences of these men, but also how many people viewed a return to conflict in post- Second World War society. From here, the everyday methods of army control and uniformity over a former civilian's life are highlighted through the lens of the men who experienced it first-hand. How civilians were made into soldiers through tight regulation of their every moment and movement from the second they arrived at their training depots. Methods of implementing control over soldiers' minds and bodies did not reflect any social or political changes in post-war Britain and were mainly a continuation of what had occurred throughout the Second World War. Men's bodies were completely subject to army control, in terms of physical health, controlled through rigorous fitness regimes and diets, as well as tight restrictions on the soldier's time and space in the world. Following this, the social interactions of the men now in uniform but not yet deployed will be explored. National Service brought a wide diversity of men from various social backgrounds into close contact and this section will analyse how they sought to project their masculinity and dominance, as well as friendship and comradeship into their new environment.

Finally, this chapter illuminates the sorely underexplored matter of the experience of soldier's deployment itself. Although for the most part there was little enthusiasm for the prospect of fighting in Korea surprisingly, some soldiers viewed the conflict as an attractive posting. In terms of travel and deployment, Korea was very much more akin to a far-flung colonial conflict and in most cases, British soldiers aboard aged troopships and commandeered German steamers had to endure an arduous crossing of six weeks or more. Conditions aboard these vessels were far from uniform but ranged from tolerable at best to vile at worst. This part of the men's war, hitherto disregarded, is both microcosmic of the experiences of army life in general and significant to understanding the wider experience of a soldier in Korea.

The second chapter of this work focuses exclusively on one element of the Korean War which has indeed been examined in traditional military histories, but remains misunderstood from the individual's perspective. The frontline environment of the Korean War was one which has traditionally been considered only as a background to tactical and strategic studies of the war, rather than the hugely significant element of a soldier's experience that it was. This chapter shows that the frontlines were not simply the background to a soldier's life, but were an indelible part of their world. Additionally, we will see how the overwhelming dominance of the First and Second World Wars in subsequent narratives shaped the ways in which Korea veterans related and remembered their own experiences. The battlefield environment of Korea, is shown to be something of a duality. In the traditional strategic sense, Korea was a wholly new environment for the British Army. The rugged, mountainous terrain of the valleys and hills of Korea was unfamiliar to the army, as were the extreme weather patterns of the peninsula. From this broad strategic standpoint, nothing in the majority of the army's

experience over the previous fifty years could quite compare to Korea. However, from the viewpoint of the infantryman on the ground, the battlefields of Korea echoed strongly, their perception of the experience of the fighting man in the trenches of the First World War. Aside from some obvious physical comparisons which become apparent in examining soldiers' testimonies, it is evident that the men on the frontline were also framing their experiences in the popular memories of the First World War. Consideration is given to this point, specifically how the contemporary popular narrative of war was still dominated by 'the Somme and Passchendaele', and how these images became how men in Korea related their own experiences. There are also many specific elements of the environment this chapter covers. Death and the presence of the deceased was a common feature of the frontlines of Korea. Particularly in the later stages of the war where lines were occupied for months at a time. Veterans of Korea placed the presence of death centrally in their memories of the frontline environment, in what was a reflection of recollection from the World Wars. A surprising difference between memories of Korea and the earlier wars however, is the perceived absence of the dead between the frontlines, showing that there were further still elements of the Korean experience that could not be related back by veterans. This chapter also explores the importance of soldiers' daily routines in the environment. Maintaining not only personal hygiene, but also the state of the frontline environment itself also proved as important a detail as the fighting itself for many soldiers. Similarly, soldiers had to make great efforts to maintain the upkeep of their positions. Just as was the case in the First World War, soldiers had to spend a great deal of time creating, maintaining and repairing the earthworks which protected them. Finally, an overlooked, yet self-evident, part of the frontline environment highlighted by this chapter is the acknowledgement soldiers had for the general danger the trenches

of Korea posed. This is an element of life which is generally taken as a given in traditional military histories; yet this chapter will show that for the troops on the ground, the threat to their safety the environment posed was very much acknowledged in their everyday experience. For the troops fighting in 1950s Korea, the smaller elements of the frontlines, overlooked by traditional military studies, were as significant a part of their environment as the hills and mountains with which they were surrounded.

The third chapter provides an examination of that most central aspect to a fighting soldier's role in war, combat. However, this is not a simple analysis of tactical manoeuvres and engagements as is primarily the case in the majority of existing studies of the Korean War. Instead, this chapter examines fighting from the perspective of what John Ellis described as 'the poor bloody infantry'.⁴⁵ Naturally, killing and combat have been subject to a great deal of study in new military history, however, by examining the new perspective provided by the recollections of Korea veterans, this study provides not only more material to do the same, but also hitherto unrecognised points in the historiography. How soldiers viewed and have continued to view their North Korean and Chinese opponents for example, is a key part of understanding how their oral testimony can shed light on not just Korea, but wider studies of fighting in the Twentieth Century. Unlike in many soldiers' accounts of killing on the European battlefields of the First and Second World Wars in which their enemies were mainly relatable, the opposition in Korea were alien to British troops. Racial attitudes, a general apathy to the cause of the war and the manner in which fighting predominantly occurred shaped British soldier's view of the enemy to allow them to speak of killing and combat in much more open and less reserved terms. There were many factors of the combat

⁴⁵ J. Ellis, 'Reflections on the 'Sharp End' of War', P. 12.

experience which could skew a soldier's view of their enemy to a more dehumanised perspective. Most of the large-scale combat in Korea took place at long range or in the dark of the night against enemies barely visible as individual people. Even when the enemy was visible, but a part of a human wave attack, the numbers involved could individuality of an enemy to more of a general concept than a person. Veterans of fighting in these scenarios were less weighed down by the emotional strain of killing someone they perceived as an individual and were therefore able to discuss their combat experiences more freely. Again, this allows this study to view the wider concept of military killing from a much more open and unreserved perspective which can be applied more generally than Korea. The same was also true of men who fought as part of an armoured crew, where the mechanised nature of their actions and role as part of a group separated them from the humanity of their task. Of course, this was different for British troops who engaged in close quarters combat with an easily visualised opponent. Men who encountered the enemy like this were far more likely to develop a far more emotional response to the acts of killing and fighting individuals than those who had been unable to see their enemy. Having examined how soldiers viewed their enemy during the act of killing, this chapter will then moves on to examine how soldiers reacted to the fear of being killed or wounded themselves throughout the conflict. All soldiers on the frontline were constantly aware of the dangers posed to them. Some soldiers were struck down by this fear, losing control of their nerves and even bodily functions. In other cases, some soldiers, particularly those in leadership roles reacted to fear by trying to set examples to those around them deliberately doubling down on their task at hand to keep their minds occupied. Another reaction was deliberate nonchalance about the dangers posed to their lives and limbs. Soldiers would view the danger of combat as something which

only affected others and would deliberately abandon armour, helmets and even the safety of their lines in spite of instructions. Such actions often dropped off when members of their units were killed or wounded themselves. This study will then take a novel approach to examine what the experience of combat was like for men who were not deployed to fight directly on the frontlines. These were personnel who were usually 'behind the line' and were not serving in a combat role when circumstances forced them into battle. Although these instances were rare, analysis of how these men reacted to the dangers of the battle in Korea provides a great insight into wider knowledge of combat in general. Some of these individuals became entranced by the allure of surviving danger and transferred to frontline roles. Others developed a new deeper sense of fear for their own personal safety when confronted with the effects of battle close up and changed their view of fighting entirely. In all these cases, a new deeper understanding of fighting is revealed by the oral testimonies of the soldiers who fought there, which helps to shed light on the wider experience of fighting troops throughout the Twentieth Century.

The fourth chapter will then explore the manner in which soldiers responded to the stresses of combat and life on the frontline through social contact. This chapter primarily focuses upon the social experience of soldiers in Korea and recentring this important part of their lives in narratives of the war. Additionally, this allows the chapter to unveil new insights into wider British society and its relationship with soldiers abroad during this time. In the past, the social elements of life on the Korean frontline have been considered secondary to ongoing events on the field of battle. In keeping with what has been achieved by new military history with regards to other major Twentieth Century conflicts, this chapter considers the ways in

which the social lives of the soldiers, their shaped group behaviour, group identity and human bonds, were just as if not more important to them as any other part of the war around them. Though soldiers had begun bonding in the earliest days of their military careers, their deployment to the frontlines made this process all the more important and to a very personal extent. The experience of close living on the frontline, surviving together in combat and the necessary cooperation required by the daily tasks of the army all helped to develop an intricate social structure and brought men from all social backgrounds closer together. There was no greater demonstration of this than the importance of close friendships and social groups to soldiers. Friendships were amongst the strongest and most important social mechanisms for dealing with the stresses of life on the frontline and soldiers ensured that they remained close to their friends whenever possible. Friend groups and mates were as much a part of soldier's lives as their dugouts and daily routines and stuck together like childhood friends. They ate, lived and slept alongside each other for social comfort whenever possible and provided one and other with support. The kinds of close emotional and personal care these groups provided for one and other was hugely significant to their experiences. These behaviours ranged from ensuring that each man in the group had high morale and was cared for. Soldiers who were unable to integrate into a close social group found the stresses and insecurities of life in the trenches and dugouts of the frontline to be considerably more difficult and sought out emotional connections wherever they could. In some instances, social care was more parental than brotherly. In particular, the notion of communal 'mothering', where soldiers would adopt traditionally parental roles behaviours to look after one and other, is a phenomenon that was as common in Korea. Some soldiers, particularly officers and non-commissioned officers, reacted to the situations of the men they led in a

similar manner to parents. They scolded poor behaviour, looked out for younger troops and ensured care was distributed. Soldiers looked up to these individuals and spoke of them highly, as if they would a parent. These behaviours were not always selfless, tank crews for example saw to it that their driver was cared for most as he had the most responsibility in combat for ensuring the groups safety. Regardless of the intent however, these social support structures were beneficial to soldiers for the most part but this was not always the case. This chapter also reveals the extent to which the identities and expected behaviours of society in the 1950s played into an individual's experience on the Korean frontlines. Group hierarchies and social dynamics and self-perception demanded that men behaved in certain expected ways. Essentially, some soldiers were consciously adopting warped self-views in order to better personify the idea of a soldier to themselves. In either to portray any number of self-images, be they masculinity, courage or national identity, soldiers would deliberately hide their true reactions and emotions in order to reinforce an imagined self-image to their social group. We will see from this that even as far away as Korea, ideas about how an individual should behave in a British social setting were persuasive. The ways in which soldiers in Korea forged their social bonds will also be examined in this chapter. Group acquisition and consumption of drinks such as tea and alcohol acted as a social bonding exercise between soldiers. These activities provided both a direct coping mechanism to provide a comfort from the more difficult aspects of frontline life and also worked as social currency. As the British Army was one of the few forces in Korea still receiving alcohol as part of troops' rations, it was in relative abundance and could be gifted as a reward, used to steady the nerves or simply traded for goods. Additionally, this chapter further examines how the social lives of troops on the frontlines did not occur in a vacuum and will link the experience of Korea with

life in Britain. For soldiers in Korea, post and long-range communication was a very important element in their social routine, whether they were active letter writers or not. The methods of communication home and their respective importance to both soldiers and their loved ones in Britain formed an important part of the wider social experience. The post not only provided a social lifeline to families and friends, but its arrival prompted an opportunity for communal gathering as well. Even a month out of date, football scores and comics alike were shared up and down the trenches. This shows the importance of home to the soldiers in Korea and provide a deeper understanding of how the people of Britain were intimately linked to their loved ones serving abroad. A final point of this chapter is an analysis of the social activity soldiers conducted whilst on leave. Whether healing from wounds or recuperating from time on the front, men who took leave in Japan experienced a much greater freedom of social activities than was available to them in Korea. These activities could range from the mundane such as visiting friends or cultural trips, to illicit engagement with prostitutes. This reveals how the army's attitudes to leave were shaped by not only fears of 'social mixing' and the possibilities of venereal diseases, but also by a strengthened desire to ensure the welfare of its soldiers away from the frontlines. Finally, the fifth examines the post- Korea experience of British soldiers. Like many aspects of the individual in the Korean War, this post-war history remains largely overlooked. Although Grace Huxford has written on the wider societal repercussions of how the Korean War came to be the archetypal 'forgotten war', the first-hand experience of the soldiers has yet to be considered by most scholarly writings.⁴⁶ This chapter highlights how life for Korea veterans existed in a society already well accustomed to re-integrating former soldiers, sailors and airman.

⁴⁶ G. Huxford, *The Korean War in Britain*; 'The Korean War Never Happened', PP. 195-219; "'Write Your Life!'", PP. 3- 23.

The unceremonious end of fighting in distant Korea was only eight years after the end of the Second World War and general attitudes to the war itself were largely apathetic. Given the proximity of the Second World War and society's lack of interest in Korea, it is perhaps unsurprising that representations of the conflict were mostly overshadowed by media relating to the much more edifying victory in 1945. In British popular culture and society at large, Korea was quietly forgotten. Having explored how this happened, the chapter examines what it was like for veterans to find themselves in this society, being forgotten first hand. Obviously, close friends and family were very aware of their efforts, but in the face of wider societal apathy, many men experienced huge difficulties reintegrating to civilian life. Again, in the cases of other conflicts, the social and emotional difficulties of ex-soldiers' reintegration have been well covered. Michael Roper and Joanna Burke, amongst many others, have written at length on the return of the soldier from the First and Second World Wars.⁴⁷ This chapter then shows that veterans of Korea, like the generations before them, also faced difficult social struggles in the face of a seemingly indifferent society; in many cases these men had been removed from their formative years and prospective careers by National Service, only to lose out on their return from action. Unresolved social issues were common and symptoms of what would be today classified as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), such as horrific and violent nightmares, were common in veterans for years, sometimes decades after the war's end. These issues contributed to social isolation and difficulties for many, leading them to alcohol and substance abuse, without any formal support structures available to them. In these circumstances, it fell to family, friends and other veterans to support one and

⁴⁷ J. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, PP. 335- 357; *Dismembering the Male*; Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle, Emotional Survival in the First World War*, (Manchester, 2009), PP. 276- 313.

other. Finally, this chapter demonstrates how veterans associations and organisations formed in the post- Korea years and sought to reclaim the place of their veterans in the narrative of the Korean War. A reoccurring theme of the post-conflict narratives of Korea is the extent to which the war itself and its participants were collectively forgotten by society. In response to and defiance of this, organisations such as the BKVA began to claim ownership of the moniker, as is evidenced in the body of work constituting veterans' publishing. A further role of veteran's organisations that this chapter will examine is their action in allowing veterans to revisit and re-remember Korea in peacetime. With help from the South Korean government, the effect these trips have on veterans and their attitudes to the war could be profound.

Chapter 2: Life before the Frontlines.

The Ideologies Behind Training

One of the most fundamental parts of the experience for all men who served in Korea was their initial contact with military life and training. At first it may seem that examining the experiences of men in training in the late 1940s and early 1950s would yield little new knowledge about army life or British Society, given how short a time had passed since the end of the Second World War and how training regimes had gone basically unchanged. However, what new recruits said of their initial time in training can actually give us a tremendous new perspective of not only the men's experience, but also a new context to the early days of the Cold War in Post- War Britain. However, before looking into the individual opinions of the soldiers, there are overarching aspects of Post Second World War training that need to be considered.

On paper, the very ideology behind training in the British army was quite different from how it had existed in the Second World War. There were two alternate motivations behind training following the introduction of National Service. Officially, the motivations behind army training and National Service were purely pragmatic. When the Labour Government introduced the National Service Act in 1947, it was stringently maintained as being vital for national defence as Britain's ongoing military commitments around the world in the wake of the Second World War could only be met effectively with the reintroduction of National Service in peacetime. In a time hallmarked by military shrinkage, National Service was billed as being a pragmatic solution to foreign policy needs rather than for social or domestic

political motivations.¹ However, at a conceptual level, the reintroduction of obligatory service in the armed forces was a much more complicated matter. On the one hand there was a strong political motivation behind National Service. Aside from the military applications of National Service, there was a desire to develop a generation of young men entering the army into effective 'civilian soldiers'. What this ideology aimed to create was characterised by the ideal of a serviceman who in their temporary posting as a soldier, became fitter, better educated and more effective in society and importantly, recognised their wider role in a societal context.² This domestic and social implication of National Service became clear very early on, with some commentators describing the new body of recruits as a 'Citizen Army in the old traditions' as early as 1948.³ However, this side of National Service was less to do with using these men's brief time to create an army of 'citizen soldiers', but rather to develop them through military service into better civilians later. High ranking members and former members of the government described National Service in terms of its use in domestic affairs, such as helping to maintain employment levels and its usefulness as a form of mass education.⁴ Indeed, the educational aspect of general military service was pushed to such an extent that the army created several Preliminary Education Centres. These centres were aimed at alleviating the problems caused by disruption to schooling by the Second World War, such as poor literacy amongst some recruits

¹ L. V. Scott, *Conscription and the Attlee Government, The Politics and Policy of National Service 1945- 1951*, (Oxford, 1993), P.271; 'National Service- Continuing Commitments', *UK Parliament, Living Heritage*, [<https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/yourcountry/overview/nationalservice/>], last accessed 14th October 2019.

² G. Huxford, *The Korean War in Britain, Citizenship, Selfhood and Forgetting*, (Manchester 2018), P. 76; Directorate of Army Education, *The British Way and Purpose: Consolidated Version*, (London, 1944), PP. 13- 44.

³ A. Wavell, 'Minerva's Owl, or Education in the Army', *Army Education: The Journal of the Army Educational Corps*, 22:1 (1948), PP. 11- 12.

⁴ TNA, CAB 129/32/21, A.V Alexander, Statement on Defence, 1949, 8th February, 1949; Sir George Schuster (MP), 'Letter: Men on National Service', *The Times*, 8th October 1954, P.9.

and partially aimed at developing a sense of citizenship amongst their attendees. Discussion forums, engagement with political debates and a motivation that an understanding of British democracy underpinned the 'modern thinking soldier' were all elements used to develop National Servicemen into better civilians after their service had ceased.⁵ The other principle behind National Service was relative to ideas forming in the US. This was to create an army of 'Cold War warriors', a body of combat ready soldiers eager to defend British values in the face of a growing communist threat.⁶ This framing of ideologically motivated soldiers became especially apparent in recruiting alongside of National Service. In its own recruitment pamphlets, the British Army had begun to start framing its new post-war form in terms of 'giving the opportunity for service to Country and the Cause of Humanity'.⁷ The implication therefore, that the new opposition of communism represented a threat to country and the causes of humanity. This way of thought behind army training in the late 1940s, which carried on throughout the Cold War, was the desire to develop a strong-willed belief in soldiers that the general threat of global communism was as severe as that which had been posed by Nazi Germany. In this line of thinking, the soldier would be imbued to defend the somewhat vague idea of a 'British' or more generally 'Western' way of life against communism and represent what would later be termed a 'Cold War warrior'. It could easily be argued that this ideal was successfully applied to the soldiers who ended up fighting the Korean War. The war was and still is legitimised to the British public as having been to defeat a wider global communist threat to the interests of Britain and her allies and was thereby framed as being in defence of

⁵ G. Huxford, PP. 77- 78.

⁶ C. Flint, 'Mobilizing Civil Society for the Hegemonic State: The Korean War and the Construction of Soldier-Citizens in the United States', in D. Cowen and E. Gilbert (eds), *War, Citizenship, Territory*, (Abingdon, 2008), PP. 345- 361.

⁷ War Office, *The Army, A Modern Career*, (London, 1946), PP. 5- 6, P. 10 & P. 26.

the British way of life. Indeed, some soldiers did reflect upon their enemy in terms of fighting communism.⁸ However, upon examining the recollections of the men who went through their training and their pre-war experiences, the reality of army life before deployment was far more pragmatic than political. On the whole, life in the British Army before the Korean War was much the same as it had been in the early 1940s. There were of course some differences, on a practical note John Ellis made the case that in terms of equipment, tactics and expertise, the British Army at the end of the Second World War was at a more sophisticated level than at any other point in its history thus far.⁹ Following the lessons learned throughout the 1940s, the British soldier of the 1950s had to master complex equipment and small unit tactics in the field, whilst also demanding immediate discipline to command. At the same time, troops had to be proficient in the use of modern and advanced equipment ranging from self-propelled artillery to portable radios to light machineguns and grenades. In short, the levels of skill and training expected of the mid-century British Infantryman would have been completely bewildering to past generations of the army¹⁰. However, many of the practices required to implement this remained basically unchanged. Many aspects of army life remained completely unchanged and the army's training policies remained much more focused upon simply making disciplined soldiers rather than pushing towards any specific ideals. The results of this were born out with news of the Korean War's start. Most soldiers met the news of the war with various reactions, from an apathetic disinterest to an enthusiasm to see action, but only rarely from any desires to follow citizenly duty or to defeat the evils of global communism. In short,

⁸ Hansard, HC Deb. Vol. 512, Cols. 844- 910, MR. Charles Simmons (MP), 9th March 1953; Private Papers of 2nd Lieutenant J. J. Potter, Letter to Parents, 28th January 1951, (IWM Docs. 6882).

⁹ J. Ellis, *The Sharp End, The Fighting Man in World War II*, (London, 2009), P.10.

¹⁰ Ibid, P. 10.

the experience of soldiers training for Korea was more their own personal continuation of Second World War training, than a reflection of new post-war values.

Motivations and Reactions Towards Service

The initial experience of the Korean War soldier was not uniform and began in numerous ways. Some men had many years of service under their belts when they were martialled to Korea, others were new soldiers, enlisted or called up in the years during and immediately prior to the war itself. In the latter case, their experience of the Korean War began with their motivations for and reactions to first joining the army. What they describe of their time is reflective both of their own experiences and of how the new social rhetoric behind army training actually impacted the men themselves. Grace Huxford suggests that one of the defining traits of military training in the late 1940s and early 1950s was an attempt to develop a generation of post-war 'civilian soldiers' motivated by wider social changes in post-war Britain. She argues that this was evident in the very mechanisms of National Service itself and how it processed, quantified, utilised and cultivated men in compulsory service to become 'citizen soldiers'.¹¹ Of course, the term 'citizen soldier' is not a straightforward concept; it carries many different connotations to different people in different times and as such it can be difficult to understand what this meant in 1950 for National Servicemen during their basic training. Huxford suggests that the concept had evolved through the First and Second World Wars in Britain, away from a matter of purely national duties and civic participation as it had existed in the 19th century, to a more specific entity.¹²

¹¹ G. Huxford, PP. 73- 74.

¹² Ibid, PP. 76- 77; R. C. Snyder, *Citizen Soldiers: and Manly Warriors, Military Service and Gender in the Republican Tradition*, (Oxford, 1999), P. 183; H. B. McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers: The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War*, (Cambridge, 2005), P.7.

The very nature of this system and its inherent goal was to train soldiers, who encompassed traditional ideas of soldierly duty whilst in service, improving upon their skill set as individuals for post-service life. To an extent this was driven by changing ideologies in post-war Britain. We can see across wider society that significant actions were being taken in the direction of public service, most notably the foundation of the National Health Service. However, although it is clear to see that ideas on public service and the duty of government organisations to its citizens were at large in post-war society, the impact these wider ideals had on the day to day experience of military life was less noticeable. Whatever the motivations were behind the policy, to the individual, the experience of compulsory enlistment was more to do with their own personal circumstances than any wider socio-political ideals.

For National Servicemen, their call up and subsequent training represented less of an opportunity for patriotic duty and was more of a break from their planned civilian lives. Of course, not all individuals viewed their call up in a negative light. It is true that many men were resentful of the disruption to their young lives and some struggled with the loss of individuality in the face of regulations and uniformity. Others however, welcomed this as an opportunity, finding that National Service improved their current situation and prospects. What is conspicuously lacking in most accounts however, are any notions pertaining to the concept of becoming a citizen soldier and similarly absent is any mass fervour to counter the perceived threat of communism. If men reacted to enlistment without pretensions to being citizen soldiers or warriors of the Cold War, what were their motivations and reactions? For men like Joseph Strode, who ended up in the King's Regiment in Korea, the reactions to National Service were a part of the time-honoured

tradition of serving alongside ones friends, rather than for a greater cause of citizenly duty:

My Dad got me a job on the railways. It was a government job which is why I didn't go into National Service when I was eighteen. If I'd gone then, in 1948, I'd have probably missed Korea. I wanted to go, all the friends I had went into the army when they turned eighteen and I wanted to get in there. It was only a couple weeks after I left the railways that I got my call up papers.¹³

Strode's initial reaction to National Service and towards his reserved occupation on the railways, was resentment that he could not go in with his friends when he turned eighteen. He felt that he was being excluded from his friendship group and being left behind on account of his reserved occupation. Strode felt eager to join them in 1948 and that his occupation, which by nature of being reserved indicated it was an important duty, was holding him back and leaving him left out. This is a theme in keeping with the image of military service which had been built between the Second World War and the later period and represents an underappreciated continuity between these times. Linsey Robb's work encapsulated how post-war representations of military service were tied into portrayals of masculinity and manliness, whereas men in civilian roles were left out of the wartime story.¹⁴ In essence, the roles of reserved occupations and the people employed in them, were quite literally left out. For Strode, it seems that this was precisely the case. Strode was more concerned with being alongside his friends and not being left out, than serving for serving's sake. A similar case to Strode was that of William Clark, who was called up under similar circumstances but took a much more pessimistic

¹³ Cpl. Joseph Strode, A coy, 1st Battalion, The King's Regiment, in, Colin Shindler, *National Service: From Aldershot to Aden, Tales from the Conscripts, 1946- 62*, (London, 2012), P. 81.

¹⁴ L. Robb, 'The Cushy Number': Civilian Men in British Post War Representations of the Second World War', in L. Robb & J. Pattinson (eds.), *Men, Masculinities and Male Culture in the Second World War*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), PP. 169- 170; C. Peniston-Bird, 'Commemorating Invisible Men: Reserved Occupations', in, L. Robb & J. Pattinson, *Men, Masculinities and Male Culture in the Second World War*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), PP. 189- 214.

view of National Service on account of the low wages compared to his civilian prospects.

I was called up in May 1950. I should've gone in 48, but because I was a Bricklayers Apprentice, you could put it back 2 years, so I was 20 when I did my National Service. I would've liked to have avoided it because the money was not much good.¹⁵

Clark was more begrudging in his take on National Service than Strode. Both cases demonstrate a lack of citizenly soldier ideals, but whereas Strode actively wanted to join his friends after his reserved occupation, Clark wished he could have avoided National Service altogether. This is hardly surprising given the effort Clark had put into his apprenticeship, only to be forced into the army regardless and demonstrates how far removed some individuals could be from welcoming ideas of national duty.

There were of course cases where an individual was made to feel the pressure of the notion of citizenly duty in order to sign up. However, the men in question still had to frame their response in personal terms. Malcolm Frost, having just left school in 1951, was looking to enter further education and found that doing National Service could provide him with an opportunity to further his pursuit of academia in spite of his lower grades:

Leaving school, my grades weren't quite what I needed to get to my university choice. So, I could do my National Service now, or defer it and go to teacher training college. The chap at Cambridge said to me they would not have accepted me straight from school anyway. He was a First World War veteran, he'd been wounded in a tank during the war. When I did my interview, I told him that after I did National Service, I'd like to go into education and his reaction was that it was 'a fine call, get out and join the infantry and then we'll take you on.'¹⁶

¹⁵ Pte. William Clark, 1st Battalion, Gloucester Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 19/08/1998, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 18459), Reel 1.

¹⁶ Pte. Malcolm Frost, 1st Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 1/4/2005, Peter Hart, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 27272), Reel 1.

In Frost's case, starting National Service sooner was presented to him as an alternative to a teacher training course and a pathway to further academia. It would seem that the professor at Cambridge discussing Frost's predicament considered National Service as something which would have elevated Frost to a point where he could be taken on as a student. What was therefore being presented to Frost was an outright example of how military service would make him more valued as a citizen, especially in the eyes of a First World War veteran. It is telling that this was presented to Frost by someone who had already been a part of the British military. The fact that the place at Cambridge was offered towards a period of National Service over Frost's alternative of a teaching course, demonstrates the extent to which service was valued in a society where significant numbers of older generations had themselves been militarised. For Frost's part, he did indeed start his National Service rather than defer it, however it was in order to facilitate the appearance of a citizen soldier, jumping through the hoop as it were, instead of genuine citizenly duty.

Of course, there were some who did fall into the idealised image of the happy citizen soldier, however even in these cases personal matters were the priority for the man at hand. One such case was David Green, called up in early 1950, who was amongst the body of young men who actively looked forward to National Service. In his memoirs, he reflected on his life prior to National Service on his first day and the opportunity to improve upon it provided by the army:

I looked back over the past few years, which certainly had their ups and downs. I reflected that today I was setting out on a new life and one into which I was determined to put my heart and soul. All those blots on my copy book, such as my recent spell in Gloucester Jail for theft, would be water under the bridge.¹⁷

¹⁷ D. Green, *Captured at the Imjin River, The Korean War Memoirs of a Gloster, 1950-1953*, (Barnsley, 2003), P. 2

For Green, the army provided a new life away from past mistakes and a meaning and structure, into which he could truly and determinately apply himself. Of course, this attitude was not unique to the generation of soldiers and National Servicemen who would end up fighting in Korea, nor is it a newly observed phenomenon. Denis Winter noted that as far back as the initial recruitment of Kitchener's armies in the opening of the First World War, there were those men who responded to the demands of the army's regime by aligning their goals with army life. In doing so, these men would find dignity and self-respect by becoming the 'smart saluters, who might well become NCOs'.¹⁸ The difference in these cases to those observed by Winter, is that the post-war generation, especially before the outbreak of the Korean conflict, had no great war to fight. Even during the conflict, Korea never developed the great national callings seen during the First and Second World War. Yet for men like Green, their enthusiasm for army life did not require the zeal of a national emergency. So, do these happily conscripted men represent at last a significant step towards citizen soldiers? For the most part, they did not and this is evidenced in Green's recollections. As much as he was willing to throw himself at being a citizen soldier, it was still for personal reasons, not duty driven. Primarily, Green was happy as it allowed him to avoid stagnation as a person. On this note he added, 'Before I had received my call up papers, I had been growing increasingly unsettled and bored, constantly seeking something I could really get stuck into'¹⁹. From this, we can see that Green viewed National Service as a personal escape from boring circumstances, not a grand patriotic undertaking or even an adventure, but simply an alternative to what he was already bored of. What the views of Green and men like him show, is that in Post- Second World War Britain, most individuals had not yet entered into a 'Cold War' way of thinking.

¹⁸ Dennis Winter, *Death's Men, Soldiers of the Great War*, (London, 1978), P. 44.

¹⁹ D. Green, P. 2.

Notable for its absence in all of these testimonies is a sense of patriotic gesture. There is little to no expression of a need to defend one's country or fight the good fight as was seen during the Second World War and neither was there shown any great concern for what we now see as the early days of the Cold War. For the average new recruit into the British Army in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the context of the new and changing post war world as we see it now was simply secondary to personal affairs. This was also something evident in the testimonies of reservist troops and veterans who re-entered the army during these years.

Veteran and Reservist Reactions to the Post-War British Army

When the British Army ran its recruitment campaigns in the late 1940s, highly prominent was the pamphlet *The Army, A Modern Career*. The booklet published by the War Office and covered in cutting edge graphic artwork, proudly proclaimed it would be an Army 'in which the most modern developments, not only in weapons and equipment, but also in organisation and administration, will find full place' and 'above all, soldiering gives the opportunity for Service to the Country and to the cause of humanity and justice'.²⁰ These are both prominent talking points in the narratives of creating citizen soldiers and furthermore, the booklet opens with a specific appeal to former soldiers who 'served during the emergency and wish to re-join'.²¹ Clearly, the ideals aimed towards the development of citizen soldiers was also being directed at returning soldiers and veterans. If any great ideological change towards creating citizen soldiers had therefore occurred, it would have been evidenced in the recollections of those such men who had already served prior to the Korean War. However, in these cases, there is again a distinct lack of evidence to suggest such a change in army mentality ever occurred and for the

²⁰ War Office, *The Army, A Modern Career*, (London, 1946), P. 1 & P. 6.

²¹ Ibid, P. 1

most part they serve to suggest a system of continuity, rather than a new shift in organisation and administration.

In a prime case of continuity regarding motivations for serving, many veterans were happy to re-join the army simply to continue being soldiers. Lieutenant John Shipster, who had served with the Indian Army through the Burmese campaign in the Second World War, transferred to the Middlesex Regiment for just this reason:

I joined the Middlesex very soon after returning from Burma to England, I'd been in the Punjab Regiment during the (Second World) War. I'd still, as always wanted to be a regular soldier and it was not possible for me to stay with the Indian Army, so I applied for a regular commission in the British Army. I attended a selection board and was then later given a commission in the Middlesex Regiment.²²

Shipster represents something of an archetypal career soldier, but not in the mould of a citizen soldier or for any Cold War ideology. For Shipster, his decision to re-enlist as an officer was more to do with remaining a soldier than with the sorts of citizenly duty the army was hoping to entice people with. He did not reference any desire to serve for country or the causes of humanity, but rather he just wanted to stay in an armed force. This is evidenced further by his clear preference would have been to remain with the post-independence Indian Army and only joined the British Army as the former avenue was closed to him. Other former serviceman, such as William Fox, were also motivated by older mechanisms, such as chasing a sense of adventure. Fox had attempted to volunteer as a regular soldier in 1948, however he was instead taken on as a National Serviceman, remaining in England throughout. Having finished his stint in National Service when the Korean War broke out, Fox readily volunteered:

They asked for volunteers who had just come out of the army. I volunteered for eighteen months. For me, going to this place I'd never heard of on the

²² Lt. John Shipster, B Company, 1st Battalion, Middlesex Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 15/08/1998, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 18443), Reel 1.

other side of the world, fighting under General MacArthur, it seemed like a marvellous adventure.²³

Fox wanted to re-enlist for a sense of adventure and to see a new part of the world, again, a very old thought process rather than any new social motivation.

To an extent there was a significant number of reactions to returning which completely reject the ideas of national duty as citizen soldiers, particularly amongst men who were recalled to service. Thomas McMahon for example, was a reservist in 1950 who had formerly been a machine gunner and POW during the Second World War. Having survived the Siege of Tobruk, internment in the infamous Stalag POW camps, a death march to Czechoslovakia and several escape attempts, McMahon was called up as a reinforcement to Korea, despite his previous and lengthy service. Understandably, both he and his wife were very upset by the circumstances:

I was on reserve, just waiting to finish my time with the army, I'd had enough of it. Then 1950 came and they recalled me for the Korean War. I had to go, I was on reserve, I were still a soldier, couldn't refuse I had to go. It wasn't just me but it was how my Misses felt, she was angry, because we hadn't long been married.²⁴

Understandably, both McMahon and his new wife were very angry about his recall. This was not least because they had only been married for a short time when Thomas was sent to Korea. This lines up with another phenomenon Huxford describes in regards to family reactions to the outbreak of the war. For understandable reason, female family members were just as, if not more opposed to their husbands and sons being sent to Korea than the men themselves.²⁵ In this case, the McMahon family's strain was exaggerated beyond that by the fact that

²³ William Fox, in S. Kelly, *British Soldiers of the Korean War, in Their Own Words*, (Briscombe, 2013), P.21.

²⁴ Fusilier Thomas McMahon, S Company, 1st Battalion, Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 29/4/1999, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 18819), Reel 3.

²⁵ G. Huxford, PP. 30- 32.

they were newlyweds when he was called up. The obligation of a 'citizen soldier' was in this case was actively detrimental to his personal circumstances.

For a small percentage of men, in such difficult circumstances, the answer to the call up in 1950 was to desert, or at least not to report for duty when summoned.

Although desertion and absenteeism was nothing new in 1950, having been noted for centuries and actively recorded throughout the Twentieth Century, as might be expected, the onset of the Korean War did herald a significant increase in desertion rates.²⁶ Parliamentary findings in 1950 showed that just over three quarters of deserters from the British Army were National Servicemen.²⁷

Furthermore, the Secretary of State for War, Antony Head, claimed that there were four hundred and thirty new men absent from duty in the year 1950.²⁸ However, the numbers are not quite that simple to fully understand for various reasons.

Whilst the rise in absentees in 1950 was still much more significant than it had been in 1949, when National Service was formally reinstated, the same statistics shown to the House of Commons also indicate that it was a far lower number of desertions than the army had suffered in 1948, when almost one thousand men were absent from duty.²⁹ Additionally, the British Army's official definition of deserter was not the same as an absentee. By military law, a deserter was defined as a soldier whose purpose was to remain away permanently from military responsibilities and would be treated much more harshly than an absentee. An absentee was considered to be someone who had temporarily left their post without leave, known as going AWOL and so would usually not be criminally

²⁶ E. Newlands, *Civilians into Soldiers, War, The Body and British Army Recruits, 1939-45*, (Manchester, 2014), P. 71.

²⁷ Hansard, HC Deb. Vol 484, Cols 214- 215, 14th June 1950.

²⁸ Hansard, HC Deb. Vol 503, Col 1966, 15th July 1952.

²⁹ Ibid.

charged, though they would still face punishment.³⁰ In short, not all of the men Parliament considered to have been absentees were in fact deserters and eventually returned to their posts.

One man who fell afoul of the army's approach to absenteeism and desertion was Ronald Pickering, then a soldier who had only just become a reservist days before. Pickering was mistakenly considered AWOL whilst he was returning home from his initial posting in Germany:

I got home and there were all these letters, calling me back to active service. I wasn't in the house a full day before these two lads, MPs [Military Policemen], show up. I tried explaining, but they said I'd had enough time putting it off and that I had to come with them right there on the spot or I'd be court-marshalled. I asked if I could at least wait until my wife comes in and explain it all to her and pack my things, but they wouldn't have it. So, they march me off, down the station and put me on the next train leaving. I just got off at the next stop, about three miles on and walked home. I ended up staying three more days before I left and showed up in my own time, nobody seemed to notice.³¹

Pickering details how he nearly experienced the more forceful side of military discipline due to the administrative error and how seriously AWOL could be taken by the army in such circumstances. Pickering was more disgruntled than outright angry, as McMahon had been and his reaction indicated how seriously he took the incident. In spite of the severity of the MPs, according to Pickering no one on the base seemed to have actually noticed his lateness and he resumed his service from there with no ill effect. Again, what is clearly shown in all of these cases is that personal circumstances were overwhelmingly more important to soldiers than either the context of the Cold War or any notions of post war citizenry. This may seem to be a statement of the obvious, however it must be remembered that the context of not only the Korean War, but also the wider Cold War has never been considered from these men's points of view. Bearing the experiences of these men

³⁰ Home Office, *Handbook of Military Law*, (London, 1929), P. 19.

³¹ Pte. Ron Pickering, (Interview with Drew James Ryder 10/06/2019, Yarm).

in mind, it seems more than likely that individual concern about the Cold War was less significant than it may seem on a wider international level.

The Implementation of Army Control

In terms of what the British Army itself desired from its new source of recruits, it seems that it was more concerned with the practical realities of disciplining men and pragmatic training protocols over new social ideology. Regardless of their attitudes to enlistment and as had been the case in the previous World War, in 1950 soldiers from all backgrounds in training faced a programme, designed not only to control their physical standards, but also their very life in terms of time and space.³² Regardless of whether a new recruit had been drafted as a National Serviceman, or volunteered as a full time soldier, the British Army's first action with them was to strip away their individual identity as much as possible and impose their unit identity. Of course, in 1950 this was generally nothing new, though there were new elements which had emerged since the Second World War. One such example of this was the new policy on medical examination, known as the Pulheems system, adopted by all branches of the military since April 1948. This system graded various physical attributes of potential enlistees in numeric value, ranging from one to eight. Ben Perry found that his medical gradings blocked his request to join his preferred service. 'I really wanted to join the Royal Navy. I was sent to Worcester for my medical and I was temporarily accepted, but eventually, along came this letter saying my classification was rejected and I was instead being called up to the army'.³³ From there, Perry ended up in the General Service Corps, where the numerical grading of his person became more extreme. 'They assessed you, but it depended upon what they were looking for at the time. They'd

³² E. Newlands, PP. 62- 63.

³³ Pte. Ben Perry, Royal Army Service Corps, in C. Shindler, *National Service: From Aldershot to Aden, Tales from the Conscripts, 1946- 62*, (London, 2012), P. 27.

give you maths to see how thick you were and then they'd make you assemble bicycle pumps or door locks, that sort of thing'.³⁴ Perry's account shows how much the soldier's early experience was dictated by grading and assessment.

Essentially, the army could not decide what to do with him until he had been thoroughly assessed, from basic health to mathematics and even how quickly Perry could assemble simple machines. In other cases, the army was far less stringent and picky than it had been for Perry. As was the case with Joseph Strode's medical: 'I fainted at my medical, which wasn't a good start. We were all standing in a line and I started sweating and collapsed. Anyway, I got through and they sent me off to Chester for my basic training'.³⁵ Despite the obsessive collection of data regarding a new recruit, their experience would indicate that it was all irrelevant in the end, as they were remodelled from recruits into soldiers.

One of the first forms of control the army exerted over individuals was drill. Just as they had during the Second World War, in the time of the Korea army training manuals still stated that 'in order for a soldier to reach his maximum potential, he will thus become competent to play his full part in the teamwork of his sub-unit in battle'.³⁶ Some of the techniques used by the army to achieve this are detailed by Newlands at length.³⁷ The use of uniform, drill, team sports, group responsibilities, all fostered a controlled group identity. From a soldier's first moments in the army, drill and uniformity were used as a primary component in encouraging collective discipline. As much as the monotony of drill created the learned instinct to automatically follow orders, vital for military coordination, it also required a state of

³⁴ Ibid, P. 28.

³⁵ Cpl. Joseph Strode, A coy, 1st Bn, The King's Regiment, in, C. Shindler, P. 81

³⁶ War Office, *Basic and Battle Physical Training*, Part I, P. 9.

³⁷ E. Newlands, PP. 63- 69.

group trust and created a sense of group pride. In this sense, drill was as much a part of military identity as any uniform or standard. Ron Sullivan, recalled how he developed a particular fondness for drill and uniformity during his training, specifically how it fostered group co-responsibility:

Drill was fantastic I loved it. When we were on parade, they'd always say, 'well done Sullivan', because my uniform was always pressed and immaculate [...] The thing with the drill and all of it was that we were thirty-one men and it made you act as one. If on inspection the sergeant came, if one of you was bad, it was all of you was bad. He don't get punished, you all get punished.³⁸

There are implications that can be gleaned from Sullivan's reflection on drill, particularly the group responsibility regarding uniform and presentation. If one man was bad on the drill square, the whole group received punishment. Aside from the element to which this created group responsibility, it also placed the welfare of others in the interests of the individual. In essence, this incentivised soldiers within a unit to interact, encourage and support each other.

Once a group identity had been created, the nature of how men were mixed into regiments composed of individuals from around Britain had a great effect on how they behaved. Even in the early stages of training, this was a strong motivator for changes in social behaviour. Sullivan for example, recounted how his experience of mixing with others in the barracks changed his attitudes towards education. In the thirty-man group, he found that having to work closely with people with higher levels of education had a profound effect on his own self-view and encouraged him to volunteer for the army's remedial education courses:

I could read and write but not all that good and when I joined the army and from the first minute, I was mixing with guys who'd, well they'd not been to university, but had good schooling and could read a book and understand it and write nice letters. I looked at them and I thought, 'God, I've wasted so much time, I need to get cracking'. So suddenly I was mixing with different

³⁸ Pte. Ron Sullivan, 120 Mortar Battery, Royal Artillery, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 1/8/2007, Peter Hart, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 30017), Reel 2.

types of people, people who were getting nice parcels from home, nice cakes we'd share or whatever and I thought I need to be like them.³⁹

What his account tells us is that once he was made to interact closely with people who had a higher level of education, he became very conscious of how his own education was holding him back and limiting his ability to integrate with the group. The implications that suddenly he was 'mixing with people who were getting nice parcels', indicates that by changing his educational position, he was better able to align his social interactions with people he considered more educated. In doing so he was apparently successful in improving his relations with these people and that he was able to partake in social bonding activities such as sharing gifted food. Of course, the desire to integrate into a social group is nothing new in wartime, or even particular to British troops. Peter Cooke noted American soldiers in the First World War exhibiting similar behaviours. This included the old trope of denying promotion to remain in the same social group as one had been trained in.⁴⁰ However, the need to shape one's social behavior to fit in with the group was not limited to educational status or training.

Another area of British Army life which saw little change between the Second World War and the Korean War was the emphasis training placed on health and fitness. The reasons for this are relatively self-explanatory, as it was always in the army's best interests to maintain healthy soldiers who were physically ready for the necessities of frontline combat, both in terms of physical fitness and diet, all British soldiers had to experience the often gruelling processes of Physical Training (PT), in order to meet the army's basic levels of fitness. In the 1950s, as it had in the Second World War, the army would push new recruits to their physical

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ J. Cooke, 'The American Soldier in France, 1917- 1919', in H. Cecil & P. Liddle, (eds.), *Facing Armageddon, The First World War Experienced*, (Barnsley, 1996), PP. 246- 247.

limits as often as possible in order to prepare them for the eventualities of battle. However, it was not limited to simple route marches and drill. Physical fitness had become a complex and engineered matter long before the need to train men for Korea. The British Army had been refining its process for building men's fitness since the inter-war years. Physical fitness and nutrition during training had been refined to a set level by the Second World War, with recruits being given between four and five thousand calories of food and strict exercise every day. However, to accommodate for vast numbers of National Servicemen from a wide background of health and the general concept of a 'people's war', the army had stepped up its efforts in terms of getting soldiers fit.⁴¹ This policy is best demonstrated in the establishment of Physical Development Centres. These special camps were implemented in order to raise those men considered well below the army's normal standards up to a basic level of fitness. By carefully controlling recruits' diets and physical training, the army was able to train almost any civilian off the street, even those it would previously have passed up on, to a high standard. The Physical Development Centres remained active in the 1950s, demonstrating that the army still pursued the ideal of physically improving their entire intake for the Korean War's generation of soldiers. The stated goal of the army's fitness regime at this time was to 'raise recruits efficiency and render them fit for more strenuous and active employment'.⁴²

Soldiers in 1950 were met with the practical realities of this policy almost immediately upon their entry to the army. David Green recalled how, before even

⁴¹ M. Harrison, *Medicine and Victory: British Military Medicine in the Second World War*, (Oxford, 2004), P.6.

⁴² F. Crew, *The Army Medical Services: Administration, Volume 1*, (London, 1953), PP. 375- 376.

reaching the barracks on his first day as a National Serviceman in 1950, his intake witnessed the effects of PT on other training soldiers:

Our driver began to slow down as we passed a bunch of about forty lads of our age, running three abreast, with a very athletic companion at their side. He was shouting out encouragement, such as, 'Get the lead out of those bloody legs boys! Only another five miles to go!'. The whiteness of their bodies emphasised the look of strain on their faces. This sighting had the effect of straightening out a number of backs and a mental reassessment of one's own body and its capabilities.⁴³

Before dissecting the rest of the statement, it is worth noting that the transport carrying Green and the rest of his fellow recruits had slowed down to pass the soldiers on PT. Coupled with the instructor shouting out to the runners as they passed seems to indicate a show was being made of it for the sake of the new recruits. The soldiers were being run in a large group, line abreast, echoing the ranks and files of a drill formation and doubtless with the same intention of reinforcing the group mentality amidst the strain of the run. Green describes the instructor as noticeably athletic, contrasting to the men who were 'strained white with exertion'. Clearly the instructor seemed keen on highlighting the difference between himself and the men at his command, who were struggling, by shouting what Green sarcastically describes as 'encouragement'. The instructor insinuated that what was difficult for the group was easy for him, implying that they should 'get the lead out' and that there were 'only five miles to go'. This appears to be a textbook example of 'Drill bashing' or negative reinforcement by which the instructor is goading the men to do better and prove him wrong, whilst still maintaining both a physical and literal superiority. The effect on the new recruits seems to have been amplified by this. Green, who believed himself to have been made fit by his 'love of sports and job as a labourer', suddenly found himself 'reassessing his own body's capabilities'⁴⁴. Green's worries about PT proved to be

⁴³ D. Green, PP. 4- 5.

⁴⁴ Ibid, P. 5.

well founded when he and his friends found themselves on the same route march not long afterwards:

Every Saturday, we did that same three mile run around the hills [...] It was a killer and we'd come in falling all over the place, to the slave driving jeers of our super-fit instructors, [...], I can hear my friend Pete now: 'Jesus Christ, what are they doing to us? The sadistic bastards'.⁴⁵

Green and his friends were pushed to their limits by the cross-country aspects of their PT. His unit would return to barracks every Saturday 'falling all over the place' with exhaustion, only to be met with jeers and mocking from the already fit instructors. The difficulties some of Green's fellow recruits faced are demonstrated by the harshness of the words his friend had for the instructors, calling them 'sadistic bastards' and suggesting that it was a pointless and torturous task with no obvious point. Of course, as with many facets of the troops' lives, PT was not experienced or indeed implemented in a universal manner. Ron Sullivan, during his initial basic training, seemed to thoroughly enjoy PT throughout his training and indicates that weekly route marches and cross- country were not universal practices:

We never really did any cross-country runs in our basic. We seldom got out of the barracks actually. I did do an assault course, but that was much later. I liked PT. I was fit back then, really fit, even though I only played a bit of football, it was all we had back then. But when I went in the army, I was 10 out of 10. I could do the runs and I could do anything else. You'd do your climbing up ropes, jumping over the horse, running around that sort of thing. All the time, arm stretch arm stretch, knee stretch, all getting you fit, getting you moving.⁴⁶

According to Sullivan, the gruelling cross-country route marches experienced by Green were a rarity throughout his basic training with the Royal Artillery's Training Regiment. It would seem that the training of an artilleryman focused less on the need for long distance endurance than an infantryman. More telling is the

⁴⁵ Ibid, P. 8.

⁴⁶ Pte. Ron Sullivan, (IWM 30017), Reel 2.

difference in approaches taken by the instructors in Sullivan's regiment. The artillerymen spent most of their PT on camp and 'seldom left the barracks', in stark contrast to Green's weekly route marches through the hills. Sullivan describes a greater range of the exercises PT consisted of, including 'climbing up ropes, jumping over the horse, running around that sort of thing'. Although Green does not mention any of this, it does not mean this sort of training was limited to Sullivan's experience. Rather it indicates that the difficult marches were the more prominent part of Green's experience on account of their difficulty. Conversely, Sullivan seems to have actively enjoyed PT with the Royal Artillery, something which he credits to his fitness before joining. While Green doubted himself on first joining the Army, Sullivan considered himself 'very fit' and '10/10' from playing football. This enabled him to, do anything the army asked of him in terms of PT, again contrasting with Green who would 'fall about' after PT. In both cases however, the end goal of the army's policy on PT became apparent in both men's experience. In Sullivan's words, it was all about 'getting you fit, getting you moving'. Of course, a soldiers' physical development was not limited to their exercise, but also in the army's control over their diet.

The food intake of the average British soldier was an understandably significant part of their experience in training. Of course, this too was given much attention by the army, having long realised that, for want of a better term, its soldiers marched on their stomachs. Diet and nutrition had been one of the champion concerns when training soldiers in the Second World War. Emma Newlands discusses in detail the lengths taken by the army throughout the 1940s to effectively feed and nourish its new recruits. This included the establishment of no less than twenty-four cookery schools, in which catering experts from civilian backgrounds educated army cooks in nutrition and variety, as well as the development of a

Manual of Military Cooking and Dietary.⁴⁷ The general result of this was that soldiers training during the Second World War were more or less happy about their food situation, mostly considering it to be 'sufficient for a sense of wellbeing'.⁴⁸ For the most part, this sentiment carried over to the generation of new recruits training before and during the Korean War, as the army continued with similar guidelines on nutrition. However, one major difference in this otherwise continuous experience is the state of food consumption prior to entering the armed forces. Unlike the Soldiers who joined up during the Second World War, the men whose formative years were during the World War experienced one of the worst household diets in Twentieth Century Britain. For those growing up in wartime, the average annual intake of proteins, fruits and vegetables had dropped significantly from before the war.⁴⁹ Even in the years following the war, limited food stocks, rationing and the world wide effort of recovery meant that even by 1950, the average British individual was only consuming approximately 68.4% of the protein intake of pre-war levels.⁵⁰

This is a different matter for army personnel, who received 22lbs more protein per head annually than their civilian counterparts, which whilst still less than the pre-war average, was a significant enough figure to be appreciated by some troops.⁵¹ Sullivan certainly noticed how much more food he was receiving in comparison to what he was used to in civilian life. 'Well the difference was with being in the army, you always got that bit more than what you did at home. I wouldn't say it was great

⁴⁷ E. Newlands, PP. 56- 58;

War Office, *Manual of Military Cooking and Dietary: Part 1, General*, (London, 1940).

⁴⁸ William Partridge, Royal Ordinance Corps, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 20/04/2001, Nigel de Lee, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 21565), Reel 2.

⁴⁹ Ministry of Food, *The Urban Working Class Household Diet, 1940- 1941: First Report of the National Food Survey Committee*, (London, 1951), [Cmd.7842], PP. 54- 58.

⁵⁰ Ibid, Table 63, 'Food Supplies Moving into Civilian Consumption as Estimated in "Food Consumption Levels in the United Kingdom"'.
⁵¹ E. Newlands, P. 57.

food, but it was enough and well presented'.⁵² Although Sullivan did not think the food was particularly nice in any way, he clearly noticed how he was receiving more and better presented food than he had been as a civilian. Frost had a similarly positive memory of the food; however, he also had some suspicions as to what additives had been placed there in the interests of controlling the body:

Then we went down to breakfast, which was quite substantial, the food in the Army was pretty good. It was palatable, tasted good, it wasn't thrown at you, [...] but the bromide thing was not a rumour, I don't care what anybody says, it had a taste, there was definitely bromide in the tea.⁵³

Frost, like Sullivan, noted how substantial food in the army was, as well as it being good tasting and palatable. However, he also thoroughly believed that the food and drinks were being spiked with bromide. It had long been a rumour amongst soldiers that the army was going to such lengths, particularly with bromide, in order to suppress sexual drive.⁵⁴ Even in 1950, this was not a new phenomenon in soldiers' experience. The suspicions Frost held towards the contents of his tea had been a long enduring myth within the British Army, dating back to well before the Second World War. However, the reality of the situation is likely very different. Peter Ferris in 1993 and later Newlands, both make the case that that the resulting lowering of sex drive in soldiers during their training was far more likely due to an increase in strenuous activity, a controlled lifestyle and a lack of privacy.⁵⁵ This was also the stance taken by the Royal Army Medical Corps when it addressed the rumours in 1956, stating that it was 'active and varied pattern of army life' which left little energy for sexual desires, rather than the addition of bromide.⁵⁶

⁵² Pte. Ron Sullivan, (IWM 30017), Reel 2.

⁵³ Pte. Malcolm Frost, (IWM 27272) Reel 1.

⁵⁴ E. Newlands, P. 58; P. Ferris, *Sex and the British: A Twentieth Century History*, (London, 1993), P. 43.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ MOA TC29, Forces: Men in the Forces 1939- 1956, 29/E, Life in a depot- RAMC, P.4.

Regardless of the truthfulness of the bromide myths, they certainly played a role in a wider part of many soldiers' experience in training, that being the ways in which the army managed their interactions with civilians. The end result of all the drill, PT and discipline throughout basic training was the creation of a unit of soldiers out of a wide variety of individuals. For a good number of these men, the end of basic training was a moment of great pride and achievement, despite it only being the technical start of their military careers. Green reflected upon how he had tearfully watched as his unit arrived for a parade:

They swung into view. With bayonets fixed and arms swinging in perfect unison, they looked a million dollars. At once I saw how that rabble had become an immaculate, well-drilled platoon who marched with the swing of trained soldiers [...] If at that moment those lads had been marching into the hell of Monte Cassino, I would have been there with them.⁵⁷

We can see how the rigors of basic training had, in Green's view, moulded a 'rabble', into an immaculate, well-drilled platoon.⁵⁸ The history of his regiment had also been imprinted upon him by NCOs and lectures, being keenly aware of the 'hell' the unit had gone through during the Second World War at Monte Cassino all the way back to the Napoleonic War.⁵⁹ This further highlights the unifying effect basic training had upon these soldiers. Green was fully prepared to follow the rest of these men into just such a hell, which of course eventually he would in Korea. However, for the new recruit, there was still a considerable way to go before they departed for the distant conflict.

Social Interaction amongst 'Citizen Soldiers'

One thing that remained largely unchanged from the Second World War for soldiers training for Korea was the mixing of a large number of people from hugely different social backgrounds. This was particularly true for National Servicemen,

⁵⁷ D. Green, P. 11

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid, P. 12.

as the very nature of the system brought young men from different backgrounds into the same training camps. The practical implications of this as National Service was implemented, was a militarisation of an entire generation, almost regardless of background and resultantly a huge mixing of people from various social positions.⁶⁰ Frost remembered how he witnessed the effects of this first hand when he was recruited in the 1950s:

When I joined up, I found there was an enormous spectrum of people that were brought together. In my intake we had the Bishop of Norwich's son and at the other end of the spectrum we had lads from the east end of London who'd come in from borstal. You arrive as a civilian basically, but within a very short time you realise that you're going to be told exactly what to do and exactly how to do it.⁶¹

Frost saw a great variety of people from vastly different backgrounds being integrated into the army's system. The whole class range appeared to be represented in Frost's intake and Frost's own assessment of his new barrack mates shows how aware he was of both the geographic and class differences between these men who had been placed together for basic training. Yet immediately, the army removed these parameters from the men, thus indicating the practical side of uniformity. This diverse group of which Frost was a part were now having their civilian social identities removed and all being directed and commanded in the same way, being told 'exactly what to do and how to do it'. These effects could have altogether more tangible effects on soldiers' experience. As was often the case, many of a soldier's best friends could be made in the army. With the mixing of people provided by National Service prior to the Korean War, men from starkly different backgrounds became fast friends during their basic training. David Green met the man who would eventually become the dedicatee of his memoir on the train to Bulford Camp, sharing nothing in common except that

⁶⁰ R. Broad, *Conscription in Britain, 1939- 1964: The Militarisation of a Generation*, (London, 2006), P. 110.

⁶¹ Pte. Malcolm Frost, (IWM 27272), Reel 1.

they had both been called up at the same time: 'There was something about Pete that made me feel we would be mates. As we talked on, the feeling became a conviction and by the time the train drew up we had already become fast friends'.⁶² Whereas Green had been something of a troubled youth who had already been incarcerated once, the man he would become best friends with was an apprentice printer from a middle class background.

The military environment into which these men entered had been permeated by ideas of manliness and masculinity going back well before the time of the Korean War. Graham Dawson makes the suggestion that within British society, army life was seen as the epitome of masculinity.⁶³ As well as the primary aim of discipline, basic training naturally sought to encourage and develop virtues such as strength, courage, endurance and of course aggression. In this environment, it was almost inevitable that new soldiers would attempt to perform these virtues of masculinity before their fellow recruits. In some predictable ways, this was manifested in displays of sexuality before others. Green noted one such example on his first day on camp, 'As we shuffled into the NAAFI, one lad started passing remarks about the girl wiping the tables. 'Not a bad bint that, I bet she does alright.' he asked her in front of everyone, 'Lately Love?' thankfully, she took it as a joke'.⁶⁴ The soldier Green described, engaged in a performance designed to assert a particular image of masculine virility over both the girl in the NAAFI and his fellow soldiers. He clearly tried to project this image of himself along the line of other recruits, in a show to reassure all present of his masculinity. These displays were of course, not unique to the post-war era. Newlands recognised how soldiers used displays of

⁶² D. Green, PP. 3- 4.

⁶³ Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure and the Imagining of Masculinity*, (New York, 1994).

⁶⁴ D. Green, P. 6.

virility to assert their masculine identity throughout the Second World War, in various different career positions and on various occasions.⁶⁵ However, Green's experience, as well as showing a continuity between the two periods, also indicates that such behaviours were commonplace from the very earliest moments of a soldier's training.

The need to display a masculine self-identity however, did not only extend itself to a soldier's self-image and many individuals were subject to the effects of this. To an extent it was natural that placing such large and diverse groups of young men together could result in friction. Bullying mainly took the form of physical acts of dominance over other recruits. In these instances, acts of physical aggression in return were usually enough to see off the problem. Bill Crook recalled how he dealt with such an instance during his training by physical retaliation:

The only trouble I had was a fight. He was a bully to everyone this chap, he came in one night and threw water over me, so I whacked him and put him on the floor. I was slung in the guardroom but he didn't do anything else after that.⁶⁶

Crook was able to establish that he was not able to be dominated physically and was therefore able to dissuade any further bullying. However, some instances of bullying extended beyond personal and physical disagreements and bled over into the realms of self and group identities. Sullivan encountered both physical bullying and fierce anti-semitic hostility during his time as a recruit and found that it was far harder to deal with the latter than the former:

In the Army, you always had the bullies. When they did come in, they didn't pick on me so much, because I didn't get nice parcels sent to me, but if they knew one of the guys had got a parcel, they'd bully him. I remember one guy tried it on with me and I said 'I don't give a shit what you do, but just remember one thing, you have to go to sleep' and he more or less left me alone until they all found out I was Jewish. I got called all sorts, 'Jewish

⁶⁵ E. Newlands, PP. 136- 137

⁶⁶ Pte. Bill Crook, A coy, 1st Battalion, Royal Norfolk Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 1/9/2007, Peter Hart, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 30409) Reel 1.

Bastard' and that sort of thing, it wasn't just the new recruits, it was a few of the other ranks. It eventually got so bad that it was one of the main reasons I changed my name from Solomon.⁶⁷

Initially, Sullivan experienced physical bullying of both himself and the men in his barracks. The motivation for this seems to have been to steal the parcels men were receiving from home. This demonstrates how more aggressive soldiers could instigate a pecking order to simply steal the goods for themselves. It would also seem that these acts were at least partially motivated by a need to project dominance over the new recruits. When Sullivan stood up to the bully who 'tried it on with him', the fact that he showed no fear and threatened revenge won him a temporary reprieve. Sullivan handled the more physical aspects of bullying well; however, when it became widely known that he was Jewish, the rest of his barracks turned on him as one group. He recalled how the bullying came from all ranks and not just the new recruits; in effect, he was singled out for having a different religious identity than the majority of his peers. Eventually, Sullivan was forced to concede to the pressure and resorted to changing his name from Solomon to Sullivan in order to better conform to the rest of the group. The fact that the group identity projection had a more profound impact on Sullivan than the physical bullying, enough to force a change of his personal identity, demonstrates just how significant group identity was in the social lives of new recruits. Although the mixing of various people from different backgrounds did see friendships and comradeship form, these were based off of circumstance of a shared sense of civic purpose. In the wider scheme, men still sought to project their own self-image over one another and suppress identities they did not find to align with their own.

⁶⁷ Pte. Ron Sullivan, (IWM 30017), Reel 1.

Deployment and Travel

Before any British soldier set foot in Korea, there was the matter of traveling across the globe to the embattled peninsula. The manner in which British troops journeyed to Korea is an area which is somewhat underexplored in terms of their individual experience. Although it is relatively well recognised that the journey in old steamers and troop transports was not always pleasant, many more personal aspects of the trip are generally ignored. The experience of deployment however, began before soldiers even left their home barracks and postings, upon their selection or volunteering to go to the war. As with many elements of the military experience, this could be varied and irregular. At the very outbreak of the war, there was initial uncertainty within the ranks as to whether British troops were going to be involved in the fighting.⁶⁸ This was made worse by the rumour and secrecy surrounding the topic. Colonel Reginald Jeffes, then stationed with the 27th Brigade in Hong Kong, was one of the first British officers to be informed of the decision to send troops to Korea and recalled the unusual manner in which he was told of his unit's deployment:

I used to play golf with the Brigadier from Headquarters. He rang me and said 'Reggie, there's to be no golf today, we're going to Korea next Friday'. The whole thing was top secret, we couldn't afford to let word get out. I went along the Battalions to do an equipment check and there was all this commotion and excitement and we couldn't tell the men anything, though naturally most guessed what was going on, they knew they were going somewhere.⁶⁹

It did not take long before news of Britain's role in the conflict became public and reactions were mixed. Initially, there seems to have been some enthusiasm amongst National Servicemen at the prospect of going to fight, however this may have been short lived. Lieutenant Anthony Perrins recalled how enthusiastically

⁶⁸ Col. H. R. Jeffes, HQ 27th Commonwealth Infantry Brigade, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 1/7/2007, Peter Hart, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 17155), Reel 1.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

National Servicemen with the Northumberland Fusiliers responded when asked to volunteer for deployment:

We were asked to get as many National Service volunteers as possible to sign on for 3 years and remain with the Regiment as it went to Korea. We started a big campaign and did extremely well. As you can imagine young men love the idea of going to some Godforsaken place which nobody had ever heard of, go off to war, it was wonderful. Very exciting. And we did very well indeed, we got an awful lot of volunteers. No sooner had we done that, than it was announced that there was an age cut off and the net result was that most of the people we had got to sign on, proved to be too young under the new age limitation, because the government didn't wish to have the embarrassment of having very young men killed or wounded. In due course, all the appetite for it was all forgotten and we went back to normal.⁷⁰

Lieutenant Perrins's account demonstrates that for many young soldiers serving their National Service duties in Britain, being sent off to fight in mysterious Korea was an exciting and adventurous prospect, as evidenced by the response his volunteering campaign achieved. However, Perrin's testimony also reveals the mixed response shown in wider society to the war and how voluntary fervour could be short lived. As he stated, the government were not keen to have young National Servicemen to be seen dying in Korea and resultantly he was unable to take most of his volunteers. Clearly, this shows that there was some significant resistance to the conflict in wider society. The time this provided for his men also shows how quickly the appetite for fighting wore off. Perrins recalled how after the interlude caused by the age cut off, the appetite amongst his men to volunteer dropped off as Korea seemed less and less appealing. Richard Vinen made the argument that Korea quickly came to be seen by most as 'a uniquely unattractive and unappealing posting' for National Servicemen.⁷¹ Indeed, even many career soldiers were unenthusiastic at the prospect of fighting in Korea. Sergeant

⁷⁰ Lt. A. Perrins, 1st Battalion, Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 23/7/1999, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 19387), Reel 1.

⁷¹ Richard Vinen, *National Service: Conscription in Britain, 1945- 1963*, (London, 2014), P. 291.

Thompson, then stationed with the Leicestershire Regiment in Hong Kong, alongside the regiments making up the 27th Brigade, remembered how few men from his unit initially volunteered for service in Korea:

Colonel Hutchinson broke the news to us that the 27th Brigade were going across to Korea and because some of their battalions were understrength, they were looking for volunteers from us to help bring them up to strength. They assembled us on the volley ball courts and announced it all and of my entire forty-five-man platoon, I think only about five or six men came forward.⁷²

Thompson's unit's reaction is telling. Of his sizable platoon, only a few men volunteered, this means that around forty of the forty-five were happy to remain in Hong Kong rather than see service in Korea. This would seem to support Vinen's idea that most of the British Army was unwilling to go to Korea; however, a not insignificant number of Korean War veterans indicate that when stationed in mundane duties throughout Britain, the Empire and occupied territories, Korea could seem very appealing.⁷³ Especially in the early stages of the conflict, once knowledge of the Korean War was more widely known but before the Chinese intervention, many soldiers viewed it as an opportunity for adventure, which appealed to them far more than the prospects of more mundane postings in Britain. Lieutenant Gary Smith explained to his parents that he viewed Korea as a safe adventure, rather than a frontline tour. 'It is a wonderful opportunity to travel which I doubt I would have otherwise had [...] I expect that everything will be all over by the time I get there, except for policing'.⁷⁴ Smith explained to his parents that the war in Korea was a 'wonderful opportunity to travel' to a new part of the world, which echoes a great deal of the rhetoric behind many soldier's wishes for

⁷² Sgt. Fredrick Thompson, Signal Coy, 1st Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 4/8/1999, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 18772), Reel 3.

⁷³ G. Huxford, PP. 87- 90.

⁷⁴ Papers of Lt. G. G. Smith, Letter to Parents, (IWM Docs. 3368, 7/07/1951).

army life. David Green's experience was very similar and he signed up to serve in Korea with very little hesitation, in the hopes of a well paid adventure:

My friends and I signed the dotted line immediately. It never crossed our minds that we'd be fighting with live ammunition against men trying to kill us. Our minds were full of the idea of a luxury cruise to the Far East and the thought of those geisha girls. Needless to say, the extra one pound eighteen shillings a week was beyond our dreams [...] The truth was I couldn't wait to get on my way.⁷⁵

Green describes how he hardly considered the dangers of fighting in Korea.

Instead, he seems to have paid more thought to the romanticised ideas of the Far East and hopes of seeing the world and adventure. Other men likewise sought postings to Korea, but more as an escape of current army life than for adventure.

Ron Page recounted how forty men from his unit, straight out of continuation training, were selected as reinforcements for what they correctly suspected was Korea: 'I didn't really mind actually, I felt that perhaps it'd be something more than repetitive barrack room soldiering. I couldn't say I held a lot of fear at the time and I felt as if we were finally getting on with something'.⁷⁶ Unlike Green, Page was sent in 1951, after the Chinese had invaded and it seemed that he was aware that it was now a more dangerous situation. Yet, in spite of his concerns he still found it preferable to life in barracks. This view was not confined to new recruits either.

Other soldiers echoed this statement, believing action in Korea was better than boring duties elsewhere. Roy Rees had been transferred away from the Northumberland Fusiliers. Eventually he returned with his new battalion to Britain following a posting to occupied Germany and found public duties in the UK unbearable:

We returned from Germany and we were given public duties, guarding up Buckingham Palace and the Bank of England and all that. It was all utter bull! Polishing your boots in little circles and being a bloody batsman to

⁷⁵ D. Green, PP. 19- 20.

⁷⁶ Pte. Robert Page, A Coy, 1st Battalion, Black Watch, (Royal Highland Regiment), (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 1/15/1998, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 17770), Reel 1.

some officer and I got a bit sick of all the bullshit. I wanted to go back to my parent regiment, so I put in a transfer. This RSM took a look at me records and told me 'I'll put you in the first draft I can get you on'.⁷⁷

Rees's levels of dissatisfaction with the prestigious role in public duties extended beyond mere boredom. To him, the menial tasks of maintaining a flawless uniform for the public and acting as a 'batsman for some officer' represented what he termed as 'utter bull'. Rees clearly felt very strongly about how his time was being practically wasted, however, despite his strong feelings on the matter, this seems to be only part of his reasoning. Rees wanted to return to the Northumberland Fusiliers, his parent regiment, the 1st Battalion of which was fighting in Korea. For Rees, his motivations were more complex than boredom with 'bullshit', he also wanted to be serving alongside what he deemed as his 'parent regiment' and put in a transfer accordingly. Both Rees and Page's testimonies indicates that alongside more complex reasons, the mere break of boredom was enough to dissuade fear of combat and fighting in the eyes of many soldiers, something which they both reiterate. It would seem therefore, that Vinen's supposition that Korea was a wholly unattractive posting in the British Army, is at least partially inaccurate, as some men saw it as a good alternative to boredom elsewhere.

The journey itself to Korea was far short of the luxury cruise some men had hoped for.⁷⁸ When the war broke out, the British Army was actually quite well positioned across the globe to deploy forces to Korea. Although the majority of infantry forces were mustered in Europe, British bases in the Far East, particularly Hong Kong and the American occupation of Japan, made for ideal staging ports to land troops on the Korean Peninsula. The result of this for the individual soldier was a long,

⁷⁷ Pte. Roy Rees, Z Company, 1st Battalion, Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 26/10/1999, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 19854) Reel 1.

⁷⁸ D. Green, P. 19.

slow sea journey to reach these ports, followed by an equally gruelling rail trip to the frontlines. Throughout this process, the army never released the men from its systematic control of their bodies. Their health, timetables and physical positioning were still kept under strict control. Some battalions, especially those of the 27th Brigade already stationed in Hong Kong, had relatively short journeys, however, some units were summoned from as far afield as the Caribbean.⁷⁹ The journey to Hong Kong, then onto Japan and Korea, was always by ship, primarily in aging designated troop transports.⁸⁰ More fortunate troops, travelled on requisitioned liners, many of which were taken as reparations from Germany at the end of the Second World War. However, in both instances, the journey meant cramped conditions, sleeping in hammocks and constant army control. Private Charles Sharpling described the typical experience of crossing from Britain to Korea when the Gloucestershire Regiment was sent to Korea having just arrived from Jamaica:

We'd been earmarked for Korea and that was that. We embarked on the *Windrush* and it was a slow six weeks and it wasn't brilliant because we were in hammocks and pretty crowded, Quite a few cockroaches and what have you and a lot of the lads were seasick but I was alright. Straight to Korea from Southampton. We landed at Pusan and from there we went up to Daegu, Deigon, Kaesong, we went up to Seoul, the capital and we ended up, when the North Koreans collapsed, right up to Pyongyang. They put us on a train with those bloody awful wooden seats, god it was uncomfortable.⁸¹

Sharpling describes his journey from Southampton to Korea as being 'a slow six weeks' and emphasises the lack of comfort, being crowded into hammocks, with conditions bad enough to support the ship having a cockroach infestation. From there, Sharpling recalls how they landed in Korea without having stopped, which

⁷⁹ Pte. Charles Herbert Sharpling, A coy, Signals Platoon, 1st Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 2/2/1999, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 18544), Reel 1.

⁸⁰ Pte. Norman Woods, 1st Battalion King's Regiment, 29th Infantry, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 05/08/2000, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 20307), Reel 1.

⁸¹ Pte. Charles Herbert Sharpling, (IWM 18544) Reel 1.

was in fact a rarity for ships going to Korea, as most stopped in Hong Kong or other British controlled ports. The travel in Korea consisted of a run on 'bloody awful' trains until they reached the front. One point of note is how Sharpling describes how he was able to overcome seasickness. Particularly when it came to being sea sick, the experience of the sea crossing was a matter of chance. Some were able to weather it with relatively ease despite the age of their vessels. Private Norman Woods sailed out on the oldest troopship in British service, the *Empire Trooper* and found conditions to be bearable: 'It took us six weeks to get from Southampton to Hong Kong. It wasn't too bad, except that most of us were seasick until we acclimatised'.⁸² Others though were less fortunate and sea conditions resulted in a much more difficult experience with seasickness in the cramped confines of the vessels. James Lucock of the 1st Battalion of the King's Regiment described how terrible his journey to Korea aboard the *Astoria* was in 1953:

The *Astoria*, it was a flat-bottomed boat. What an experience, it was terrible. The ship was packed like sardines. In fact, if we had been sardines, they'd have had the RSPCA out. I've never been so sick in all my life [...] Going through the South China Sea everyone was being sick and confined within this small space. It was horrendous.⁸³

Repeatedly using words like 'terrible' and 'horrendous', Lucock recalled how the worst part of the sea crossing for him was the sea sickness, which he describes as the worst sickness of his life. Clearly, the conditions of being confined aboard a ship like that were bad enough to leave a lasting image in Lucock's memory of the crossing and for the rest of the men aboard his ship. However, the entirety of the experience of the crossing cannot be defined simply by the conditions in which the troops travelled. The experience of soldiers on the crossing was also a very

⁸² Pte. Norman Woods, (IWM 20307), Reel 1.

⁸³ James Lucock, in S. Kelly, P.50.

human one, as would be expected when men are confined together in such close conditions for several weeks.

Social life In Transit

A number of British Soldiers on their way to Korea made fast friendships with the men with whom they shared the confined space of the ship's holds. William Hiscox recalled how he 'met one of his best friends' as a result of sharing a cabin.⁸⁴

However, life on board the ships was not always socially positive. Theft of personal goods and equipment was rife on-board ship, Hiscox stated that 'you couldn't leave your kit about for a minute because someone would nick it'.⁸⁵ It seems from Hiscox's account that the close confines also produced negative behaviours between the men, in this case stealing. However, negative social traits could also go beyond acts of slight and come to a head in open violence. Lucock recalled how tensions aboard the *Astoria* led to fighting and insults. 'Some lads got into scraps and fights. We were onboard with the Royal Norfolk Regiment who didn't like us, they thought we were stropky scousers and we called them 'swedes''.⁸⁶ Lucock recalled how tensions between the different units on the ship led to fights and name calling. It seems these fights were along almost tribal lines, being between men from different units and how most of the hostility was between the different battalions. Given the close proximity of men from different units, it is perhaps unsurprising that hostility, aggression and other elements of hyper-masculinity could come to the surface so easily, just as it had throughout recruits' time in training. Green, for example recalled a Second World War veteran,

⁸⁴ Dvr. William Hiscox, 170th Independent Mortar Battery & 120th Light Anti-Air Battery, Royal Artillery, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 29/304/2006, Toby Brooks, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 28764), Reel 1.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ James Lucock, in S. Kelly, P.50.

bragging about his sexual exploits back in '44' as they passed Naples.⁸⁷ However, the environment of the crossing was not entirely cultivating of hyper-masculinity in the same way as training. Lucock also went on to describe how more tender emotions could also be laid bear with such little privacy between men. 'I was crying in my sleep most nights and fellas were getting letters from home and crying, getting homesick. When we would stop, the letters would come on and lots of poor lads got 'Dear John' letters'.⁸⁸ Joanna Bourke had noted of men in the First World War that the imminent prospect of going into combat and ergo the possibility of death brought forth more powerful emotional responses to hardship and it would seem that Lucock's experience would be a textbook case of this.⁸⁹ In the confines of the *Astoria*, men were faced with the fact that they were inexorably heading to war and did not hide their emotional responses. As Lucock stated, the worse states of crying were brought about whenever post was brought onboard ship after docking. Clearly this demonstrates that soldiers in transit were not in an emotional vacuum with each other and still maintained an emotional connection home.

Continuation of Army Control

With so many men in transit, the army never relinquished its control over their bodies, yet this proved to be much more difficult and was done in a strange duality, between strict control over men physically, but with less control over their time and between strict guidelines and relaxed enforcement. After morning inspection and PT, soldiers were pretty much given the rest of the day to do as they wished.⁹⁰ Food rationing was even less strict than it had been throughout men's training. Woods recalled how much easier luxury food was to obtain in

⁸⁷ D. Green, P.24.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ J. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male, Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, (London 1996). PP.136- 137

⁹⁰ D. Green, P. 22.

transit: 'When we left England, sweets and cigarettes were rationed and when you got on the boat they weren't, you could have as much as you liked, which suited me because I had a very sweet tooth at the time!'.⁹¹ Although Green and Woods indicate that some elements of control were more relaxed, in that their food intake and free time were no longer as strictly monitored, other aspects of life were still subject to strict control. At all times, men's general behaviour was under constant scrutiny. Green received a charge for having wet blankets on inspection: 'I snuck one night on deck to get away from the smell of vomit and was soaked by the cleaning hose. There was no disguising it before the 10 o'clock inspection, a fairly rigorous affair. I was docked two days' pay for it'.⁹² Simply by not sleeping alongside his fellow soldiers and allowing a piece of equipment to become wet, Green was docked two days' pay and put on charge. In his case, Green was being punished for not behaving as the rest of his unit had, despite there being no rule otherwise. Other instances were more straightforward. Lucock recalled how men were punished for actions they had taken, even when they were on their own time during shore leave: 'Some of us got drunk in Singapore. The six or seven lads I was with all ended up in the ship's nick at the bottom of the boat'.⁹³ For Lucock, the army exercised its control over men's behaviour even in their free time. Because they had exploited their release and become drunk on shore leave, they were arrested and thrown into the ship's brig. Clearly, even if the army was less stringent about free time, they were still strict when it came to how men acted on said time. To this end and as had been the case throughout the Second World War, the army was keen to make soldiers avoid any source of 'dangerous bodies'.⁹⁴ A primary area of concern for the army in this regard was how to prevent

⁹¹ Pte. Norman Woods, (IWM 20307), Reel 1.

⁹² D. Green, PP. 22- 23.

⁹³ James Lucock, in S. Kelly, P.50.

⁹⁴ E. Newlands, PP. 122- 136.

men engaging in sexual activities once they were on shore leave and temporarily beyond the army's direct control. In a direct continuation of the experience of the Second World War, men being shipped to Korea were subject to extensive lectures and training on the dangers of Venereal Diseases (VD). Echoing the experience of the previous decade, Roy Martin recalled the lengths Medical Officers went to dissuade men from sexual promiscuity once on shore:

We're all stood in a line and the Medical Officer comes along with a little thing and lifts your dick up and inspects everything and I thought that was pretty grim. They were very concerned with VD on the boat, it was all VD this and VD that. Some of those films were bloody horrible, it put me off sex for life. One of them showed you this fella and they had to put this umbrella thing up his willy, that was very grim and it really put you off. But a lot of it still went on over there still. They were worried about men going with whoever in Hong Kong and bringing it to Korea, hence the inspection.⁹⁵

The inspection Martin recalled bore all the hallmarks of the army's control over the men's bodies, regimenting them into drill like lines for the rather humiliating inspection. Martin emphasises the unpleasantness of the situation, repeatedly calling the whole thing 'grim'. From his account, the officers aboard his ship were hugely concerned with preventing the spread of VD and the unpleasant inspection was only the initial phase of this. As Newlands noted during the 1940s, propaganda was a powerful tool in attempting to control men's attitudes towards sex and Martin recalled how little was different in his experience.⁹⁶ He describes how the bombardment with information, 'VD this and VD' that and especially a graphic depiction of the treatment for gonorrhoea, 'put him off sex for life', clearly indicating the extent to which it affected him personally. Despite his own discomfort however, it seems the army's attempt in this field were only partly successful, as he describes how 'a lot of it still went on over there'. In short, it

⁹⁵ Pte. Roy Martin, Royal Army Ordinance Corps, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 01/07/2007, Peter Hart, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 30011), Reel 3.

⁹⁶ E. Newlands, P. 132.

seems that there was only so much the army could do to dissuade men from acting on instinct, after they had been confined aboard ship for so long.

Conclusion

At the end of their journey, British soldiers found themselves on a distant, embattled peninsula, a world away from home. They were trained, equipped and about to engage in the largest conflict of the twentieth century outside of the World Wars. However, had their experience from enlistment to arrival in Korea made them the idealised citizen soldiers as policy makers had hoped?⁹⁷ If we look at the connotation as it was understood at the time through Huxford's definition as citizen soldier's characterised by a serviceman cognisant of his place in a social context and a broader motivations for his service, it appears army training failed to do this.⁹⁸ From their initial enlistment, men sought their own interests above any broader social implications of their service. Where people did give over to the process of becoming a soldier or National Serviceman, it was because of close social pressures, such as wanting to serve alongside friends, or to escape a difficult life for better opportunities, rather than a broader motivation. For most others, an apathetic and war weary view made service in Korea an outright inconvenience at best. Although this may seem to be a statement of the obvious, it serves to clearly demonstrate that the ideas permeating British politics and motivating wide social change did not necessarily have an impact on the average individual. One area where the army did succeed in training was in its goals was in controlling the individual and inducting him into a cohesive group mentality. As it had done in the Second World War, the army was able to exercise control over the physical appearance and movements of its soldiers.⁹⁹ Through men's reactions to

⁹⁷ G. Huxford, PP. 76- 79.

⁹⁸ Ibid, PP. 76- 77.

⁹⁹ E. Newlands, PP. 63- 69

uniformity and drill, as well as the army's full control over their time-space the army was able to develop soldiers effectively to its own mould. Soldiers generally responded positively to their training regime's emphasis on their health and fitness, although through the process, the army maintained a strict outlook towards the men. This environment proved to be difficult socially. It promoted hyper-masculine traits, such as physical dominance and bullying; however, it was not a social vacuum and men were able to express their own sense of self when possible. The ultimate end-point of recruits training was the transition to the Korean frontlines. British troops faced a microcosm of their training experience as the army's control over them and their social spheres were compressed into crowded troop ships. What would follow for British soldiers was active service amongst horrific fighting and some of the most difficult terrain ever faced by the British Army. As they arrived, many soldiers reflected on the distance they had journeyed and just how remote their position could seem. Captain Charles Chester, watching the carrier which had brought him to Korea leave Pusan harbour, reflected upon this: 'It was sad to see the boat go, I remember thinking for the first time in my life, that's my last contact with home and there it goes'.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Capt. Charles Chester, 29th Infantry Division, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, Lindsay Barker, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 21030), Reel 7.

Chapter 3: Life in the Frontline Environment.

The Duality of the Environment

When he was interviewed by the Imperial War Museum in 1999, Sergeant Major George Patterson gave one of the most telling accounts of the frontline environment that had been recorded from his war:

I left the command post and slogged through the mud in the trench to get to my dugout, which was only a wee little thing, just a bed and a light. I was looking forward to reading some of my letters that I'd just received from home. I'd just laid down when there was this whoosh and this scramble of black and white and grey. I thought it had been a rat but then in the corner was this spotty white and black and snarling object, a Leopard! It had chased a rat into the light in my dugout. Oh, the sight and sound of it, I was petrified. It ran back out and I was very scared I must say.¹

Patterson's recollection of going back through the frontline trenches to his dugout could easily be mistaken for the infamous battlefields of the First World War, that is until he was confronted by a mountain leopard. Whilst the encounter with the big cat may have been somewhat rare, in many ways Patterson's reflections typified a soldier's experience of the Korean frontline environment and reveals a great deal about the narrative power held by the World Wars over the Korean experience. To the soldiers on the ground, Korea was both a reflection of the Twentieth Century's earlier conflicts, yet it also had its own unique challenges for British troops fighting in its environment. What is apparent from the testimony of the men who made it to the frontlines of Korea was that the environment in which they fought was something of a duality. It was both familiar and unusual, a reflection of past conflicts and something new and strange. Geographically, it was a new environment for the British Army. Korea's rugged, unfamiliar terrain and extreme

¹ Sgt Maj. George Patterson, A Coy, 1st Battalion, Black Watch, (Royal Highland Regiment), (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 7/7/1999, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 19094), Reel 2.

weather patterns were a far cry from the majority of the army's experience over the previous fifty years and was a shocking break from expectations developed from the Second World War. From a strategic point of view, the Korean environment seemed so alien to British Army doctrine that major adaptations had to be made to operations. A prime example of this was how the army had to completely rethink how their armoured units operated in Korea only a few months after their arrival. The Centurion Main Battle Tanks had been developed and deployed according to the army's experience on the European fields of the Second World War and were the backbone of Britain's armoured contribution to the United Nations task force. As such they were designed and operated according to doctrines developed for combat in European environments, however by January of 1951 the otherwise excellent vehicles proved 'quite unsuitable for operations in Korea' in their role as infantry support, due primarily to difficulties with the mountainous environment.² Most fighting took place in mountainous terrain and places where there were few roads wide enough to accommodate the Centurion. Additionally, where roads could accommodate the vehicles, their 52-tonne weight caused significant damage to the ground itself.³ As a result, Centurions were switched to artillery support roles, amongst a myriad of other major adaptations the army had to take to the Korean environment. From a strategic standpoint, Korea was certainly a new challenge for the British Army, however, this does not represent the whole picture of the experience of environment. As with many elements of military histories, the concept of the environment is usually applied to represent the shape and contours of a map. It is a strategic concept, concerning the difficulty of manoeuvring armies, logistical issues and coordinating plans. In this respect, the mountainous terrain of

² TNA, WO281/1, HQ British Commonwealth Korean Base, Summary of Events and Information- Reasons for the withdrawal of Centurions of 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars- 11th January 1951.

³ Ibid.

Korea, with its extremes in weather was indeed something quite unusual for the British Army. However, for the soldiers themselves within the environment, it was a more nuanced experience with both unexpected challenges and reoccurring phenomena from past conflicts. If we approach the concept of the environment from the perspective of the individual, we see continuities from past conflicts emerge in their narratives. Soldiers experienced foxholes and mud flooded trenches, behind a blighted no man's land, scarred with craters and human remains. On a superficial level, a soldier's immediate vicinity was a continuation of the First World War experience. However, they also had to deal with mountains, cliffsides, extreme weather conditions and even in Patterson's case leopards amongst other challenges which made Korea its own prospect.

Reflections of the First World War in Soldier's Experience

A key point which surfaces in veterans' testimony was the perceived similarity between the environment in which they were fighting in Korea and their notions of the First World War. What becomes particularly apparent when listening to these men's descriptions of the environment on the Korean frontline is how vividly reflective it becomes of descriptions of the Western Front. This is unsurprising as one of the major similarities and elements of continuity in the environment of the Korean War from past conflicts was the re-emergence of large-scale trench warfare. This is despite the considerable time and geographical difference between the 1914-18 battle front and the battlefields of Korea. Primarily, this is because for the troops fighting in 1950s Korea, the defensive trenches and foxholes were as significant a part of their environment as the hills and mountains into which they were dug. Yet the physical similarity of the frontline environment between Korea and the First World War is not the sole reason for the comparisons between the two. It is perhaps surprising that veterans of Korea tended to lean on

imagery of First World War Europe to relate their experiences of the Korean environment, rather than on other more contemporary world events. Possibly the most obvious comparison in hindsight to the combat environment of Korea would be the Far-Eastern Front of the Second World War. Fighting in regions like Burma and Malaysia may today seem like easy comparisons to make to Korea. Like Korea, the Far- East was subject to monsoons and high humidity and the fighting style of the Chinese and North Korean forces echoed the tactics of the armies of Imperial Japan. Yet, from the point of view of the men in Korea this comparison quickly becomes problematic. Firstly, there is the simple geographical difference between Korea and the regions in which the Far- East Theatre of the Second World War took place. Although Korea was also a recipient of heavy seasonal rains, the peninsula is much cooler and drier than the Far- East and South Pacific regions. Although summer temperatures on the Korean lowlands can approach those of the tropics, Autumnal and Winter temperatures were far lower. Similarly, Korea is much more mountainous than the Far- East theatres of the Second World War. Although the Far- East regions of the Second World War certainly had a great deal of verticality, the average elevation of Korea, which is 70% mountainous, is much higher. Additionally, there is also an element to which the average British Soldier in Korea simply was not aware of how similar the circumstances of the conflicts were. To a large extent the Korean War and the Second World War in the Far- east existed in cultural isolation from each other. Although most soldiers in Korea had an understanding of the wider Second World War, either as a veteran themselves or as the younger relative of someone who was, very few soldiers were veterans of both Korea and the Far-East. To an extent, the Far-East was already something of a 'forgotten war' by the time of the Korean War. The most iconic depiction of British troops' experience in the Far-

East, *The Bridge Over the River Kwai*, was not shown until 1956, more than two years after the last combat engagement for British soldiers in Korea. Similarly, to the difference in geography, *The Bridge Over the River Kwai*, depicted a hot, tropical experience of building railways for the Imperial Japanese, not the cold, rocky mountains of Korea. For these reasons, the Second World War in the Far-East never became a cultural touchstone for Korea veterans in the ways that the Western Fronts did. For the most part it was either too different or simply too unknown to the men in Korea to become a relatable theme in their own recounts of service. The generation of soldiers who would go on to fight in Korea grew up in a time when the popular imagery of warfare was defined by representations of the First World War. Even throughout the Second World War when many National Servicemen who fought in Korea were young boys, the popular concept of frontline warfare was that of the 1914-1918 Western Front. In fact, so dominant was the First World War in the popular imagery of the time that even during the Second World War, the primary reference for soldiers was to the former conflict. G.D. Sheffield highlighted how soldiers on various fronts throughout the 1940s continually brought their experiences into line with the frame of reference provided by folk memories of the First World War. The reason for this was the weight of the popular memories of the First World War set the benchmark for the nature of war throughout the Second World War.⁴ For soldiers in Korea, not only was there a genuine physical similarity to the 1914-18 trenches to link their experiences to the former conflict, but also the same body of popular memory to create the same benchmark. Understanding how the frontlines of Korea stagnated into trench warfare is also very important in understanding how British troops came to view

⁴ G. D. Sheffield, 'The Shadow of the Somme: The Influence of the First World War on British Soldiers' Perceptions and Behaviour in the Second World War', In P. Addison & Angus Calder (eds.), *Time to Kill, The Soldiers Experience of War in The West, 1939-1945*, (London, 1997), PP. 29- 39.

their surroundings in First World War terms. During the earlier phases of the war when United Nations forces were rolling back North Korean invading forces from South Korea, the war had little resemblance to the Western Front of the First World War. During this phase of the Korean War, the frontline was more or less in constant advance, pausing only briefly before rapid breakouts through North Korean fortified lines such as those along the Naktong River.⁵ These and similar breakouts, such as the amphibious landings at Inchon, were very similar to the manoeuvres of the Second World War, such as Normandy and the Rhine Crossing, however, this phase of the Korean War did not last indefinitely. As the war progressed and especially after the Chinese Invasion, the fighting eventually became static along the 38th Parallel, British troops found themselves increasingly defending fortified defensive lines of trenches. For the soldiers on the frontlines, life in these trenches appeared similarly to their perception of life in the First World War, in the same way as the static environments listed by Sheffield. Sergeant Edward Bulley of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry reflected on how the environment he and his Company occupied in on the frontline in 1952, was precisely what he imagined the trenches of the First World War to be like:

There were miles and miles of trenches; it was just like the 14- 18 war. We were sitting in the trench during a shelling, we got shelled quite regular. We were having a bit of a brew up and one shell landed just on the parapet just above us. All the mud, dirt and that came in.⁶

Sergeant Bulley begins with an immediate surface level comparison between his frontline position and the '14-18' war, specifically the 'miles and miles of trenches'. From this we can not only sense the scale of the defensive lines British soldiers

⁵ Col. H R Jeffes, HQ 27th Commonwealth Infantry Brigade, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 1/7/2007, Peter Hart, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 17155), Reel 1.

⁶ Sgt. Edward Bulley, A Coy, 1st Battalion, King's Shropshire Light Infantry, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 3/4/1999, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 18749), Reel 2.

were dug into in Korea, but we can also see that the link between trench warfare in Korea and trench warfare in the First World War was one very obvious to the soldiers in Korea, at least in the hindsight which has developed since the conflict ended. Bulley also discusses being shelled during his time in the trenches and how it occurred regularly, again themes synonymous with the experience of soldiers who fought on the Western Front. Other soldiers besides Bulley were quick to make the comparison too. Driver William Hiscox summarised the state of the war upon his arrival on the frontline in 1951. 'I think I got out there about the time when they was just straightening up the line. They'd decided we weren't going to go any further so now we was just going into trenches like the Great War'.⁷ As Hiscox immediately links his view of the environment to the Great War, it is clear that at least some British soldiers were aware of the elements of continuity between trench warfare in Korea and the First World War.

Death in the Trenches

Sadly, in many ways the similarities between the First World War and the Korean Frontline were not imagined or created in retrospect. One of the more haunting continuities between the trench environments of 1918 and those in Korea was the presence of half-buried dead. At Passchendaele in 1917, Lieutenant Richard Dixon of the 14th Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery, described how the corpses of the battlefield would become a horrific part of the frontline environment as they went unburied:

All around us lay the dead, half in and half out of the ground. Their hands and boots stuck out at us from the mud. Their rotting faces stared blindly at us from coverlets of mud. Skulls grinned at us. All around stank

⁷ Dvr. William Hiscox, 170th Independent Mortar Battery & 120th Light Anti-Air Battery, Royal Artillery, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 29/304/2006, Toby Brooks, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 28764), Reel 1.

unbelievably. These corpses were never buried for it was impossible for us to retrieve them. They had lain, many of them, for weeks and months.⁸

The image of rotting and forgotten corpses mangled by shell-fire jutting out into trenches is synonymous with the horrors of First World War Trench life. Michael Roper, lists an example of a young private 'Finding an arm and shoulder beneath a sandbag', further illustrating the closeness of death in the trenches.⁹ In the given battles of Sheffield's examples of Second World War static combat, there had been little time for such horrors to be fully realised in the defensive emplacements.¹⁰ Similarly, during the Second World War, there were also frequent occasions where men were forced into close contact with the dead on the frontlines. In principle, the policy of the British Army following on from the Second World War was to remove bodies from the field as soon as possible to negate any negative psychological effects upon British troops. Emma Newlands discussed how the army had come to better understand the importance of removing bodies during the Second World War and specifically the negative impact the sight of bodies could have on frontline troops.¹¹ Following from lessons learned during the prior conflict, the British Army of the 1950s was well aware of the effect the sight of dead bodies could have upon soldiers' mental health.¹² At the highest levels of command, it was also considered paramount to minimise the contact soldiers had with the dead in order to maintain high morale.¹³ During the Second World War, this was enforced by the use of a Graves Unit to recover bodies from the frontline

⁸ Lt. R. Dixon, 14th Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery, 'Life and Death in First World War Trenches', *The Telegraph*, 30th May 2014.

⁹ M. Roper, *The Secret Battle, Emotional Survival in the First World War*, (Manchester, 2009), P. 4; Papers of Pte. J. D. Tomlinson, Letter to brother Ted, (IWM Docs. 217- 2).

¹⁰ G. D. Sheffield, in *Time to Kill*, P. 36.

¹¹ E. Newlands, *Civilians into Soldiers, War, The Body and British Army Recruits, 1939-45*, (Manchester, 2014), PP. 161- 62 & 167- 170.

¹² E. Hallam, J. Hockley & G. Howarth, *Beyond the Body: Death and Social Identity*, (London, 1999), P. 128.

¹³ FMV. B. Montgomery, 'Morale in Battle, Address Given to the Royal Society of Medicine', *British Medical Journal*, 2:4479, PP. 702- 704

and have them buried according to strict regulations. This policy remained virtually unchanged in Korea, with the exception that instead of a British Graves Unit working to sanitise the frontline, the responsibility was handed over to an equivalent U.S. unit. Bodies were recovered to a brigade level much in the same way as had been done in the Second World War, however after this point, they would be placed under American arrangements in British and Commonwealth plot at a United Nations Cemetery.¹⁴ However, as was often the case during both of the World Wars, there were instances where it was simply not possible to remove bodies from the frontline environment. The Battle of the Hook for example, which was an ongoing engagement from 1951 until 1953 involved trenches and defensive lines being taken, retaken and reused as they had been throughout the First World War's Western Front. British soldiers were forced once more to experience human remains in their everyday occupied space. Sergeant Major George Patterson describes how men of the Black Watch's A Company lived with American remains in their trenches at the so-called 'Piccadilly Circus' sector, where British and American lines met near Kaesong:

There was a place we called Piccadilly Circus, where our trenches met. At this place there was a foot jutting out into the trench. We took it as a good luck symbol, used to give it a tap as we went past. Eventually, the smell began to pong a bit and on further inspection we found an old collapsed dug out, with four Americans inside. Mind it wasn't a pretty sight because they'd been there for some time.¹⁵

Patterson describes how at a busy intersection between British and American positions, a mostly buried body, uncovered only at the foot was present in his trench. Just as in the First World War, the soldiers occupying the trench seemed almost unfazed by the gore, to the extent that it was considered a macabre sign of

¹⁴ TNA, WO281/2, General Routine Orders, 19, Burials and Graves.

¹⁵ Sgt Maj. George Patterson, A Coy, 1st Battalion, Black Watch, (Royal Highland Regiment), (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 7/7/1999, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 19094), Reel 3.

luck to 'tap it' going past. This is also somewhat reflective of soldiers' experience of death in the Second World War. Newlands recounts examples of British troops in the Italian and North African theatres similarly adjusting to the dead, even finding practical uses for corpses such as signposts or even temporary furniture.¹⁶ It seems that in Korea, the practical aspects of the war forced the men in contact with the dead to become similarly adjusted, although not immune to the connotations of dead bodies. To follow up Patterson's example, the eventual decomposition of the corpse lead to the discovery of a collapsed dugout from earlier American occupation, containing the further decomposed corpses of four U.S soldiers left beneath the mud just as Dixon had described of bodies at Passchendaele. One of the leading fears of the trench environment of the First World War according to Roper was the threat of such collapsing dugouts.¹⁷ The memoirs of the First World War he discusses indicate that although soldiers were thankful for the protection and domestic spaces the dugouts offered, they could also become a soldier's tomb in the event of a direct hit.¹⁸ It is apparent from many sources that the fear of being buried alive or 'blown in' in a dugout was both prevalent and well-founded in the First World War, mentioned even by Wilfred Owen in letters home.¹⁹ It seems that this was another element of commonality between the experience of trench warfare in the First World War and Korea. Hiscox described how one of his comrades in 120 Battery reacted to simply being stationed in a dugout on the line during the static fighting in 1953:

They put three of us in a machine gun post. And this one bloke who was with us, he wouldn't go to sleep, he was in a hell of state. And when the

¹⁶ E. Newlands, P. 169.

¹⁷ M. Roper, PP. 254- 266.

¹⁸ G. Chapman, *A Passionate Prodigality, Fragments of Autobiography*, (New York, 1966), P. 202.

¹⁹ E. Leed, *No man's land: Combat and Identity in World War One*, (Cambridge, 1979), PP. 22- 23;

W. Owen, 'To Mother, 16 January 1917', in J. Bell (ed.), *Wilfred Owen, Selected Letters*, (Oxford, 1998), PP. 213- 214.

Sergeant come to see if we were getting on, he'd actually got the Bren gun down, cocked it and was shouting 'Don't move!' He was in a terrible state, he really was. I spoke to him afterwards and apparently as a kid he'd been buried alive, in the bombing in London. Trapped for a day or so underground. It'd be a horrific experience wouldn't it? They sent him home not long after that.²⁰

What Hiscox describes of his friend shows not only how a fear of being trapped in a dugout, affected the man's mental state, but also part of the root of his fears and how the army addressed them. The soldier Hiscox shared the dugout with was clearly unnerved simply by being in the enclosed space. The environment upset the man to the point where he removed an emplaced machine gun to threaten a Sergeant approaching, illustrating just how tense the experience of a confined space must have been. Hiscox also discovered that the man had a particular reason to be uncomfortable in dugouts, as he had been buried alive during the Blitz in the Second World War. This serves as a stark reminder that many of the generation of British soldiers too young to have served in the Second World War, had already experienced the effects of conflict before arriving in Korea. One final point to take from Hiscox's account was the extent to which Army policy towards mental health had changed in the time between the First World War and Korea. Instead of being put on charge, the man was evacuated from the frontlines.

Although encounters with the dead were commonplace within the trench lines themselves, one surprisingly lacking element of the Korean no man's land which sets it apart from the First World War was the relative absence of dead and wounded outside and beyond the trenches. It is hardly a stretch to state that the presence of dead bodies are a key feature of no man's land as described in the popular memories of the First World War.²¹ However, partly due to the significantly

²⁰ Dvr. William Hiscox, (IWM 28764), Reel 5.

²¹ M. Roper, PP. 1- 4; D. Winter, *Death's Men, Soldiers of the Great War*, (London, 1979), P. 138.

lower number of soldiers engaged in the Korean War and partly due to different approaches to leaving casualties on the field of battle, the no man's land of Korea was a place relatively empty of bodies. Sergeant Major Paterson described how Chinese and North Korean troops were fastidious about removing wounded and dead soldiers in battle. 'One thing which was remarkable about the Chinese was that somehow they almost always took back their wounded and their dead during the fight. They didn't want us getting any information off them. It was very rare after a battle to find any dead Chinamen'.²² This is not to say that death was completely absent from the no man's land environment, rather that it was considerably less common than it had been in the First World War. Patterson suspected that Chinese troops were keen to remove any bodies from no man's land, as they were sources of intelligence. This makes sense considering how much time British troops actually spent in no man's land. As for the lack of allied dead, in principle, the policy of the British Army following on from the Second World War was to remove bodies from the field as soon as possible to negate any negative psychological effects upon British troops.

Hygiene on the Frontline

The rapid removal of the dead brings into focus another important element of a soldier's life in the frontline environment, hygiene. The issue of hygiene was also another consistency between the World Wars and the environment of the Korean frontline. Soldiers in the British Army spent a good deal of their everyday time ensuring their positions and personal hygiene remained at a good standard even in the frontline trenches. Troops experienced the army's policy of frontline hygiene in Korea in much the same way as it had during the Second World War. Newlands recorded how the Army Hygiene Service ensured field hygiene units visited troops

²² Sgt Maj. Patterson, (IWM 19094), Reel 2.

on the front frequently, ensuring clean water for bathing reached soldiers regularly.²³ Soldiers in the Korean War also received such visits and their reaction to the arrival of hot water shows just how valued it could be for the men in the trenches. John Davison was a gunner with the 16th Field Regiment of the Royal Artillery and he expressed how grateful troops were to have access to ablutions:

Periodically, about once a week or so, we'd have a lorry come up from behind the line and take us back for a bath, it wasn't much, it were just an oil drum on pickets really, just basic, but having hot water on tap was really great for us, especially in the winter.²⁴

Davison shows that it was still important for the army to ensure it had good access to clean hot water behind the lines, even if it was in a basic manner. Davison even admits that what he was given access to was only a weekly bath in what he describes as half an oil drum, however it seems he and his fellow soldiers appreciated the access to hot water all the same. Specifically, he states how 'great for us' it was to have hot water on tap during the winter, which suggests that in the cold months of the year, the service was especially valued. Other soldiers found improvised ways to maintain cleanliness in the line, Sergeant Bulley found that soldiers were actively maintaining access to ablutions with improvised ammunition packs. 'We could always keep clean, all the ammo packs and everything came in boxes and we always had water, so somewhere someone was always boiling some on a fire made from the boxes'.²⁵ Other areas of personal hygiene were more difficult to maintain in the trenches. The first thing that William Hiscox noticed meeting his mortar battery for the first time on his arrival in the trenches, was how long the men's hair was:

²³ E. Newlands, P. 123

²⁴ Gnr. John Davison, 14th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (Interview with Drew James Ryder University Hospital of North Tees, 7/10/2017).

²⁵ Sgt. Edward Bulley, (IWM 18749), Reel 2.

What struck us immediately was the length of their hair. We'd never been allowed anything like that before, but it seemed like they were more lax about it on the front. You could tell they'd been on the front for a long time'²⁶

This indicates that soldiers on the front itself were able to be more relaxed in certain regards of their hygiene than others, revealing how the army's policy of strict control over the individual's appearance was also relaxed. The contrasting attitudes towards personal appearance and hygiene between soldiers serving on the frontline and fresh troops highlights the extent to which the army had succeeded in controlling men's bodies throughout their training. The fact that Hiscox was surprised at the length of hair on the frontlines for example, shows just how radical this image appeared to one fresh out of training.

However, this was not the case with general cleanliness in the trenches.

One detail of continuity in static warfare was the amount of general 'housekeeping' soldiers performed in their positions on the frontlines.²⁷ Patterson's account of the trenches near Kaesong included a complaint about the amount of general cleaning work required in the trenches after taking over from an American unit in 1953:

Every time we moved into a new position, we always seemed to have a tremendous amount of cleaning work to be done and we were never allowed to leave a position without it being in absolutely tiptop condition for the unit taking over from us. This didn't always happen when we took over from another unit.²⁸

Patterson implies that a good deal of time was required simply to keep the trenches in a clean and acceptable state. He implies that the trench the Black Watch was taking over from the U.S Army unit was not in a condition he would allow his troops to pass on and furthermore he discusses how his men 'always had a tremendous amount of cleaning to do'. This is consistent with experiences of soldiers in the First World War. As Roper discusses, 'housekeeping' activities

²⁶ Dvr. William Hiscox, (IWM 28764), Reel 1.

²⁷ G. D. Sheffield in, *Time to Kill*.

²⁸ Sgt Maj. George Patterson, (IWM 19094), Reel 2.

could take up to a third of a soldier's daily routine in the First World War trenches. Even the particular nature of Patterson's complaint about taking over a trench in a poor condition was reflected by soldiers in the First World War. Harold Oxley of the Middlesex regiment made an almost identical complaint in 1918 at the Battle of Lys:

We found when we took over the French trenches in the Kemmel area they were not kept in the cleanliness one would expect to find taking over from a similar infantryman to another infantryman. They were dirty and weren't in a similar condition to ours as regards to keeping clean.²⁹

Patterson states that other units 'didn't always' leave the trenches at the Hook in the conditions he would allow of his own unit, while Oxley states that French trenches were 'not kept in the cleanliness one would expect to find taking over from a similar infantryman'. In both cases the key element of continuity is that both men found that when relieving another unit in the frontline trenches, the standard of cleanliness was less than they would consider acceptable from their own men and in particular that they would not feel comfortable leaving the trench in a similar condition. Keeping the trench environment clean was hugely important in both the Korean War and the First World War to prevent the spread of vermin, which were just as present in Korea as they had been on the Western Front. It is no exaggeration to state that the mythology of the British Army in the First World War included the infamous problems of rats in the trenches and from Sergeant Bulley's accounts, it seemed the problem was also to be found in Korea: 'We used to get quite a lot of rats, running round the bunkers. I remember one night there was a rat going up and down the logs above my bunker and I managed to get him with a bayonet, they could be a real problem'.³⁰ Bulley's description of having to kill rats

²⁹ 'Harold Oxley of the Middlesex Regiment discussing the difference between British, French and German Trenches, Voices of the First World War: Trench Life', *Imperial War Museum: Voices of the First World War*, [<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/voices-of-the-first-world-war-trench-life>], last accessed 10th October, 2018.

³⁰ Sgt. Edward Bulley, (IWM 18749), Reel 2.

in his dugout with a bayonet is something which could have come straight from the descriptions of the First World War, showing that vermin were equally a much a problem in Korea as they had been on the Western Front. However, the fauna in Korea could prove to be more hazardous than their French or Belgian equivalents, at least in the minds of the soldiers. A bigger problem than the First World War lice for soldiers in the trenches of Korea was the presence, or at least fear of local mites. The U.S Army reported numerous fatal cases of illness borne from the Korean trombiculid mite in on the front and it would seem British troops were aware of this and became very cautious.³¹ Ronnie Taylor of the Durham Light Infantry described the fear these mites represented and how they affected men's behaviour:

The real problem was the mites. You had to be very careful of drying your blankets on the ground or around bushes, because they carried a mite. You were better off hanging them in the lines. Bites from these mites were fatal, I heard the Americans lost quite a few men to that.³²

Not only does Taylor mention the specific actions men took to avoid being bitten, in this case drying the blankets inside the lines rather than in the open, but he also mentions the fact that he was aware of U.S casualties from them. The concerns held by British soldiers of the threat of insects in the environment, was also reflected on an official level. Orders and training were given on the frequent deployment of the insecticide DDT. It was recommended that DDT be sprayed at a frequency of around once a month in areas where British troops were likely to encounter flies, bugs and other insects such as mites and ticks.³³ The deployment of DDT and the preventative measures mentioned by Taylor, as well as the

³¹ Lt. Col R. Traub, 'Advances in Our Knowledge of Military Medical Importance of Mites and Fleas Due to Post War Experiences in The Pacific Area', *Medical Science*, 4:2, (1954).

³² Pte. Ronnie Taylor, A Company, 1st Battalion, Durham Light Infantry, (Interview with Drew Ryder, Sedgfield, 23/3/2018).

³³ TNA, WO281/2, Safety Precautions for The Use of Residual Spray (DDT) Against Flies, Bugs and other Insects, April 1951.

relatively low number of British troops in Korea compared to the U.S Army, help to explain why there were few known British casualties due to mites. However, the fact that these measures were deployed and the soldiers' opinion of the mite threat, suggests that it was perceived to be an environmental hazard, even if the reality was less dangerous. Nonetheless, the way in which soldiers remained conscious of mites and lice despite relatively few cases indicates that they were still drawing comparisons between their own experience and their perception of life in the First World War Trenches.

Maintaining the Frontline Environment

Such actions in keeping the frontline clean were part of a daily experience that extended to physically maintaining the trench network. Just as in the First World War, the trenches of Korea were a man-made environment and therefore required maintenance. A key part of the experience of life in the First World War trenches was the creation, maintenance and repair of the earthworks to protect soldiers. Dennis Winter described how the process required to maintain trenches on the Western Front required tremendous effort from a large body of men from the second it was completed.³⁴ The key themes of his summary involve the constant problems men faced maintaining a trench in the face of shell fire, weather and mud. Although his focus is on the First World War's Western Front, examination of accounts from Korea indicate that soldiers in the 1950s viewed this as a common thread in the experience some decades later.³⁵ In 1953, Private Robert Page was with the A Company of Black Watch during their time in positions around Kaesong and went on to describe the difficulties the terrain of Korea created for troops

³⁴ D. Winter, PP. 81- 82.

³⁵ Ibid.

digging and entrenching their positions that were remarkably similar to those of the First World War:

We were always digging, reinforcing and making the positions stronger because we were taking over trenches which were hopeless towards shells. You had your pick and an entrenching tool, which was like a small pick y'know. Sometimes it was easy to dig but in the rainy season you got this thick mud, like porridge. Other times it was rocky and that was damned hard work. It depended position to position.³⁶

From Page's description, we can see how much maintenance the trenches required in order to keep the defences in good order. Page states that his unit was always 'digging, reinforcing and repairing' the trenches, which also had to be remade to improve their resilience to shellfire. Page's description of the constant work required for keeping the trenches up to scratch in the face of shells, mirrors almost exactly the experience of men in the First World War. Even the tools used in the process were practically identical to those carried by sappers on the Western Front.³⁷ Winter outlined how a very similar process was involved digging the trenches of the Western Front and keeping them repaired and weatherproof.³⁸ However, the manner in which the experience of troops may differ, is in the far harsher weather of the Korean Peninsula. Sergeant Major Patterson reflected on how the monsoon season impacted the lines around the Hook sector and the effects of how the trenches themselves could be rapidly overrun by mud: 'With the monsoons breaking all through the early part of the year you were really sloshed about. Mud would fill the trenches, you were up to the ankles as it was, but even with good drainage it'd be up to your thighs like that in minutes in the heavy rains'.³⁹ Of course, flooded trenches were not unknown in the First World War,

³⁶ Pte. Robert Page, A Coy, 1st Battalion, Black Watch, (Royal Highland Regiment), (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 1/15/1998, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 17770), Reel 2.

³⁷ Entrenching Tool 1908 Pattern Mark 1, (Imperial War Museum Collections EQU2906); Entrenching Tool 1937 Pattern Mark II, (Imperial War Museum Collections EQU4213).

³⁸ D. Winter, PP. 81- 82.

³⁹ Sgt Maj. George Patterson, (IWM19094) Reel 2.

however, Patterson's description of the trenches filling with mud and water to waste height in minutes seem to indicate that the heavy monsoons from the Sea of Japan presented something unique to the Korean trench experience, even if soldiers in Korea did not seem to believe so themselves. Another area of trench maintenance that was markedly different in Korea than the fields of Flanders, was the location of the trenches. For the most part, United Nations positions were sited along the tops of the steep hills and inclines of the Korean terrain. Although the battlegrounds of the Western Front could vary, they were generally flatter than the geography of Korea, which was significantly more mountainous and rugged. Ronnie Taylor spent part of his time in Korea manning overhead wire systems to bring materials up to the trenches and described both the situating of trenches and how materials were taken up to them:

A lot of our positions were up high, it was called skyline defence. We'd be dug-in on the forward slope and on the reverse would be all the roads and tracks to get up to them. We used to rig up overhead pulleys and things with the Koreans. They'd help bring up the meals on the pulleys from the back and lug all the ammunition and anything that was needed to us up these steep hills. If you had casualties, they'd stretcher them down to where you could get an ambulance or a helicopter to a field hospital or something like that.⁴⁰

From Taylors description, we can see how the immediate rear of the trenches occupied by British forces, though up steep slopes, were much better provided for logistically than the infamous mud fields of First World War imagery, which were constantly plagued by supply problems. Despite the increasingly complex network of supply lines and railways the British Army were able to construct between 1914 and 1918, shortages of supplies, reinforcements and ammunition were common on the frontline due to the slow pace at which logistical lines could advance over newly captured ground. Especially during advances, supply lines were simply bogged down in environmental conditions where wheeled vehicles and trains

⁴⁰ Pte. Ronnie Taylor, (Interview with Drew Ryder).

became impossible to manoeuvre. Not until the very final months before the armistice was the British Army in a position to reliably supply the frontline to its full demands and even then vast stretches of the front were as far as fifty miles ahead of the closest reliable railway heads.⁴¹ Conversely, Taylor describes how in 1952 with the help of the Koreans and overhead pulleys, they were able to bring fresh rations and other supplies up to the trenches very quickly, as well as recover casualties very quickly, even using helicopters to evacuate wounded men, something very much impossible in the First World War. This level of logistics presented a break from what would commonly have been believed about trench environments by soldiers even in the Second World War. Sheffield quotes a soldier wounded fighting in Normandy as believing he would have died on the field had it been the First World War.⁴² However, it would seem that due to the improved logistical systems and the hilly terrain of Korea, the trench environment was actually a much safer experience than it had been in the First World War. Despite these differences however, soldiers in Korea still held their experiences in close comparison to the Western Front of the Great War. This reflects the psychological effect that the narratives of the earlier conflict had upon soldiers in Korea. Because the touchstone of the First World War trenches was so potent in cultural memory even in the 1950s, soldiers of Korea overly emphasised the similarities in their experiences in spite of the differences.

Dangers of the Environment Beyond the Trenches

Adding to the sum of similarities between the Korean frontline environment and the trenches of the First World War was the very presence of a recognised 'no man's

⁴¹Supply and Transport During the First World War (29th May 2018), *The Imperial War Museum*, [<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/transport-and-supply-during-the-first-world-war>], last accessed 30th December 2018.

⁴² G. D. Sheffield, P. 37.

land' between the United Nations and North Korean lines. In keeping with its First World War predecessor, the no man's land in between trenches in Korea could be just as harsh and barren as had the divide in 1914- 1918. Private Norman Woods having arrived on the frontlines just after the Battle of the Hook, in the last few months of the Korean War, described the sight over the parapet and towards the Chinese Positions:

God it was barren. It was very barren indeed. A lot of mud and barbed wire in front of our positions, very barren. Again, something of a culture shock because I'd never seen anything like it with my own eyes before.⁴³

Sheffield briefly touches on comparisons to no man's land during the Second World War, briefly covering how the language used to describe static warfare was very reflective of that used in the First World War.⁴⁴ Phrases such as 'Trench Raiding', 'Fighting Patrols' and even 'no man's land' were reused by men of 45 Commando throughout static fighting during the Battle of Normandy.⁴⁵ Conditions in Korea however, allowed for this concept to be significantly amplified. The language used to describe no man's land in Korea is of the precise model Sheffield found occurring in the Second World War, except on a much wider scale than isolated moments in individual battles. Although the space between the lines occupied terrain very different from the battlefields of France and Belgium, the elements of the environment soldiers picked upon were very similar to that found in the First World War. On the lines for both the second and third Battles of The Hook, Sergeant Major Patterson had a great deal of experience dealing with the land between the trenches and described his key points of that environment:

Forward of the lines was ideal for snipers and we took one or two casualties from that, but there were no hits in the trenches. It wasn't just a question of

⁴³ Pte. Norman Woods, 1st Battalion King's Regiment, 29th Infantry, Imperial War Museum interview recording, 05/08/2000, (Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 20307), Reel 1.

⁴⁴ G. D. Sheffield, P. 36.

⁴⁵ Ibid; B. Samain, *Commando Men*, (London, 1988), PP. 50- 55.

keeping your head down; it was a question of not moving unnecessarily, in between the lines it was just a maze of wire and mines.⁴⁶

Patterson highlights several of the dangers he and his men faced when out of the trenches. Primarily, Patterson was concerned with sniper fire. According to him, the environment forward of the British trenches was ideal for snipers to engage, stating that he only lost men to snipers outside of the trenches. This represents another continuity between the environment of Korea and the 1914- 1918 Western Front. In the earlier conflict, aside from artillery and shelling, the primary cause of wounding for infantry in no man's land was from sniper-fire, which seems to have also been the case in Korea some thirty-five years later.⁴⁷ Patterson commented further along these lines that 'it was stupid of people to keep sticking their heads up', also echoes frequent complaints made by men in World War One.⁴⁸ He then goes on to discuss how moving unnecessarily not only made troops more liable to be hit by enemy fire, but also introduced the possibility of getting lost in the 'maze of barbed wire and mines'. Although the barbed wire was something which very much links the two wars, the development of anti-personnel mines in the years since the First World War made for a new horror for British troops in the Korean no man's land. Anti-Personnel landmines were deployed in Europe during the First World War but in relatively small numbers. However, their increased use by the 1950s in combination with the barbed wire and trenches in Korea made them a very prominent part of the frontline environment. Most sections in the Army ensured a soldier who knew the location of the mines accompanied patrols.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Sgt Maj. George Patterson, (IWM 19094) Reel 1.

⁴⁷ S. A. Rouzeau & A. Becker, 1914- 1918, *Understanding the Great War*, (London, 2002).

⁴⁸ Sgt Maj. Patterson, (IWM 19094), Reel 2;

A. Bishop & M. Bostridge, (eds.), *Letters From a Lost generation: First World War Letters of Vera Brittain and Four Friends*, (London, 1999), P. 226.

⁴⁹ Sgt. Leslie Winspear, Sniper and Intelligence Section, 1st Battalion, Duke of Wellington's Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 6/2/2001, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 21593), Reel 3.

However, as Hiscox recounted it was still easy for men to get lost and wander into danger, especially as it was not always possible to know where mines laid by other armies were:

There were always lots of mines and things, because the Yanks and Chinese used to lay mines and never knew where they were. Our officer tread on one. He tried to jump off of it and it took his leg off. If he'd have not panicked, I'm sure that if they'd have cleared it, but there you are.⁵⁰

Hiscox's description of the wounding of his officer in amongst the maze of wire and mines highlights just how dangerous patrols in no man's land could be even for experienced soldiers, however, despite the indiscriminate danger of the unmarked minefields and snipers, there was still a need for British troops to spend time in the environment between the lines.

Activities in No Man's Land

Partially due to the increased dangers beyond the parapet, activities in the Korean no man's land were mostly contained to raids and patrols. Private Page described the activities men patrolling no man's land were expected to do during their time near Kaesong:

We did various fighting patrols over the top. Fighting, raids, ambush, Reconnaissance. Fighting patrol was in force and the goal was to locate and engage enemies we found between the lines. Ambush was where you could hopefully get them in between your positions and deal with them, if you know what I mean. On one occasion we were surrounded by a Chinese patrol and Lieutenant Haw somehow managed to bluff the right phrase back to them and we escaped unscathed, not a shot fired.⁵¹

Page outlines the various types of patrol British soldiers performed in between the trenches, noting how the parties could range from small reconnaissance patrols to gather intelligence, to large 'in force' raids to engage and in some cases trap and

⁵⁰ Dvr. William Hiscox, 170th Independent Mortar Battery & 120th Light Anti-Air Battery, Royal Artillery, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 29/304/2006, Toby Brooks, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 28764), Reel 1.

⁵¹ Pte. Robert Page, A Coy, 1st Battalion, Black Watch, (Royal Highland Regiment), (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 1/15/1998, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 17770), Reel 2.

ambush Chinese patrols. The description of 'fighting patrols' and 'raids' strikes immediate similarities with the terms Sheffield found used in static Second World War combat, which were in turn 'straight from 1917'.⁵² However, language such as 'over the top' to describe the space between the trenches takes the comparison a step further, being a direct reference to the First World War no man's land. As Page notes, the environment of no man's land was by no means uncontested and the fighting that could occur there was as much an echo of the 1914- 18 Western Front as could be. Patterson described how bitter fighting could become when British and Chinese patrols met between the trenches:

Quite often the Chinese would hide in dugouts between the lines. We had cases of hand-to-hand fighting forward of the platoon positions. Which were a bit of a melee if anything else, but we gave as well as we got. It was all rifles, bayonets, picks, shovels, the whole lot, whatever came to hand.⁵³

Patterson explains how the continual raids and patrols by both sides could lead to savage encounters in no man's land, with improvised melee weapons being used to engage the enemy in close combat. Amongst the weapons Patterson listed as being used in these situations are 'bayonets, picks, shovels' and 'whatever else came to hand', implying that these moments were improvised scrambles more than planned combat. The fact that he mentions it as occurring multiple times and that he and his men would 'give as good as they got', suggests that these instances were not uncommon. Certainly, the image of British soldiers fighting for a dugout with shovels, bayonets and entrenching tools is something one would associate more closely with the First World War than fighting during the atomic age.

A common theme in depictions of the First World War is the act of common humanity in the face of wounding and death. Roper cites how national enmity was

⁵² G. D. Sheffield, P. 36.

⁵³ Sgt Maj. Patterson, (IWM 19094), Reel 2.

often reduced in the face of wounding or death on the battlefields of World War One.⁵⁴ However, this was already a popular theme in First World War Literature at a time when the Soldiers of the Korean War were young. *All Quiet on the Western Front* for example, contains a famous fictional example in which the German protagonist Paul Bäumer forgoes fighting and comforts a dying French soldier in no man's land.⁵⁵ Roper discusses how such encounters actually occurred in the First World War.⁵⁶ An account from Corporal Leslie Winspear from the Duke of Wellington's Regiment recounts how similar moments followed beyond the lines in Korea:

We had to rescue a patrol from in between the lines, the Sergeant who knew the way through the wire had been wounded, as had a couple of others and they were trapped right in front of a Chinese position in broad daylight. The Chinese didn't interfere at all. They could see the stretcher-bearers and me but there was no action from them whatsoever. They could have wiped us out if they'd wanted. That was... well it was quite a moment.⁵⁷

Winspear details how he helped to rescue wounded men trapped in amongst the 'wire in between the lines', the patrol being under the close observation of Chinese soldiers. Despite the opportunity to 'wipe out' the exposed British wounded and their rescuers, the Chinese did not interfere, allowing the evacuation. Winspear clearly recognised the human side of the interaction, remembering it with a pause as 'Quite a moment'. While such instances must have been rare, it again speaks to the close relationship and continuity in the experience of British Soldiers had of the no man's lands of 1914-18 and 1950-53. Evidently, the experience of British Soldiers in between the lines is analogous with the idea of a Korean no man's land.

⁵⁴ M. Roper, P. 2.

⁵⁵ E. M. Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, (London, 1966), Chapter 9.

⁵⁶ M. Roper, PP. 2- 3.

⁵⁷ Sgt. L. Winspear, (IWM21593), Reel 3.

Coping with Extreme Conditions

One element of the Korean War which sets it apart from the World Wars for the British Army was the extent to which British troops had to deal with climatic extremes. Dealing with the extremities of the weather systems in Korea was one of the aspects of their experience which veterans remarked about most often about their time in the war. Temperatures and local climates could vary massively across the geography of the Korean Peninsula throughout the year and became a key touchstone in veterans' memories. High temperatures in the lowlands could easily reach the high thirties Celsius, bringing the possibility of sun burn, sunstroke, as well as encouraging insect infestations and a heightened risk of malaria. Winter temperatures could prove even more challenging with the infamous Korean winters bringing Siberian weather systems down the peninsula and dragging temperatures in the hills and mountains as low as minus forty Celsius. Lieutenant Richard Skinner, a tank commander with the King's Royal Irish Hussars, spoke of the cold in terms fairly typical of British veteran's recollections when interviewed by the Imperial War Museum:

The climate I think, is the thing that one remembers most. The extreme cold in winter time and the relatively high heat, or humidity, in the summer. Certainly, the winter I think was the worst. If one put down a mug of coffee or tea on the tank or on the ground, it would probably freeze in about 30 seconds, more than a few times one would certainly find a layer of ice on your tea.⁵⁸

What Skinner describes in his account is very common amongst veterans whose recollections of Korea uses the extreme weather as a touchstone for their experience. He remembered both the high heat and humidity of the summers contrasted with the extreme cold of the winter. These extremes were problematic for British troops as it was difficult to acclimatise effectively for the rapid onset of

⁵⁸ Lt. Richard Skinner, R Squadron, 8th Battalion, King's Royal Irish Hussars, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 18/09/2000, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 20606), Reel 2.

these various weather patterns. Acclimatising men's bodies to the weather conditions where they would be deployed was a major concern for the British Army throughout the Twentieth Century.⁵⁹ Up to six weeks of a soldier's early deployment was dedicated solely to acclimatising the body to the local weather. However, the acclimatisation techniques developed by the British Army during the Second World War could only go so far when the onset of the Korean winter was in mere weeks, when the outside temperature could freeze freshly boiled tea in seconds. The first encounters with the cold of the Korean winter came with a rapid change of weather in the November of 1950, when snow fell several weeks before expected forecasts. This initially caught both the British Army and the rest of the United Nations task force off guard as cold weather equipment had not yet arrived in sufficient numbers. Karl Werner, a U.S Army historian, noted that improvised tactics were initially the only way for allied forces to deal with this, observing how some men wrapped towels around their heads, or wore double or even triple layers of clothing beneath their uniforms.⁶⁰ Geoff Holland recalled the extent of the problems the cold could cause from his duties as a radio operator during the night: 'I remember this particular night it was bloody freezing, minus thirty to minus forty and you couldn't hold your rifle with your bare hands as it would rip the skin off'.⁶¹ At such low temperatures, British and United Nations troops had to contend with frostbite, heavy snowfall and even weapon malfunctions. The problems caused by the cold were so extreme as to render artillery and armoured vehicles effectively useless as metal froze and cordite failed to ignite properly.⁶² During their first encounter with the Korean winter in 1950, British troops were left with little option

⁵⁹ E. Newlands, PP. 118- 199.

⁶⁰ Karl Werner, 'Combating Cold Korea', *U.S Army Heritage and Education Centre, U.S Army*, [https://www.army.mil/article/47963/combating_cold_korea], last accessed 23rd January 2020.

⁶¹ Geoff Holland in S. Kelly, *British Soldiers of the Korean War*, PP. 107- 108.

⁶² K. Werner, 'Combating Cold Korea'.

but to improvise solutions to the bitter cold. Ken Hawthorne recalled of the ways in which this was done:

When the cold weather came towards the end of my time, we and the Americans made up these fires or stoves. They were run on petrol but it was just an empty stove with a chimney attached and you would just heat it up and it made it lovely and warm inside the hutchie.⁶³

Hawthorne's account detailed just how troops on his part of the frontline resorted to using improvised petrol heaters in their sleeping 'hutches' to keep warm. It is worth noting that a 'Hutchie' was a nickname given by British soldiers to their small sleeping dugouts because of their resemblance to rabbit hutches. Burning petrol in these infamously small confined spaces was obviously very dangerous, however it demonstrates how desperate soldiers on the frontline were to keep the cold at bay. Part of the reason for this desperation and improvisation was because at first, British supplies of cold weather equipment were woefully inadequate and antiquated. Trooper Kenneth Black, spoke of his experience of the cold weather kit his unit had initially been supplied with when they first reached Pyongyang in the early winter of 1950:

We'd been issued with ski boots before we got to Korea. They were supposedly made for British troops who were going to fight in Finland just after the First World War or something. They were in a right state, covered in grease and they told us to clean them off and start wearing them to get used to them. We hadn't been in Korea all that long, maybe two weeks, when the soles started falling off. At that time, we got new boots off the Americans. While they were destroying their supply dumps at Pyongyang on their retreat, we got some lovely American clothing. Fur lined gaberdine suits like trench coats, these fur lined caps and that, jackets, socks trousers, shirts the lot. Apparently, the higher ups weren't very happy about us taking American gear but they laid off because so many people were doing it and later on it came in useful.⁶⁴

We can see from Black's description that the quality and age of the equipment British soldiers were issued left them with little confidence with what they had been

⁶³ Ken Hawthorne, in S. Kelly, *British Soldiers of the Korean War*, P. 107.

⁶⁴ Tpr. Kenneth Black, 8th Battalion, King's Royal Irish Hussars, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 05/12/1998, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 18022), Reel 3.

given. In particular, Black referred to how the ski boots he and his unit were issued with were of such poor quality and age that they began to fall apart within weeks of arriving in Korea. The fact that he and his fellow soldiers believed that the boots had apparently been made for troops preparing to fight in Finland as far back as the First World War demonstrates just how little confidence, they had in the kit they were issued with, regardless of whether this was true or not. Ultimately, Black and his unit became so dissatisfied with what they had been given that they resorted to taking equipment from condemned U.S supply dumps which were being destroyed as the Americans retreated. It would appear that this practice became quite widespread amongst British troops as the acquisition of U.S winter gear was so numerous that senior officers began to turn a blind eye to its use. Lieutenant Skinner also reiterated these points, demonstrating that the lack of trust in British Army preparations was not limited to junior ranks:

The temperature was very difficult and we weren't well equipped at any time, the only bit of winter equipment that we got initially was the issue of string vests. Our winter equipment was appallingly bad. I don't think the British Army had any idea how cold it was going to be. I remember that I managed to get a parka from the Americans which I swapped from them for a bottle whiskey.⁶⁵

Skinner explained how one of the only effective pieces of winter kit that was issued to him and his men were string vests to be worn beneath their normal uniforms. Skinner is much more direct in his criticisms of the army's readiness to fight in extreme temperatures, stating clearly that he had no confidence that high command had any idea how cold Korean winters could be. Clearly, the opinion and confidence soldiers had in their equipment and the army's preparedness did not only extend to the lower ranks but was shared by officers in the field. The fact that British troops in 1950 held such opinions and were forced to take such actions

⁶⁵ Lt. Richard Skinner, (IWM 20606), Reel 2.

as trading with other armies demonstrates how unprepared the British Army had initially been to deal with the harshness of the Korean winter.

From examination of the official army records, it would seem that by early 1951, the British Army had made up for its lack of initial winter preparation. Better equipment was issued to British troops from commonwealth stores, rather than U.S acquisitions and steps were already being taken to ensure that supplies would be better prepared for the next cold season.⁶⁶ This improvement in preparations for extreme weather also extended into the army's policies towards extreme heat. By 1951 the army was far better prepared for the extreme weather patterns of the Korean summer than they had been for the previous winter. Rigorous guidelines were put in place to maintain soldier's bodily health in hot weather and ensure that casualties as a result of hot weather were minimised.⁶⁷ Similarly, anti- malarial courses were organised before the Korean summer with a goal to train non-commissioned officers in as many British units as possible before the malaria season began.⁶⁸ Additionally, stringent malaria prevention procedures were put in place to limit the spread of the disease as much as possible. These included the mandatory consumption of paludrine tablets to be taken daily, the issue of mosquito nets and protective clothing, as well as DMP insect repellent to be sprayed directly onto the face, neck and hand at two hourly intervals.⁶⁹ One of the more preventative measures to protect against malaria was the process of inoculation. By the Second World War the army regarded the process of inoculation as a vital way of protecting its soldiers and men were not allowed to

⁶⁶ James Daily, in S. Kelly, P. 112; TNA, WO 281/2, General Routine Orders, 97, Quarter Master General's Branch- Cold Weather Clothing.

⁶⁷ TNA, WO 281/3, General Routine Orders, 180- 181, Hot Weather- Prevention of Ill Effects.

⁶⁸ TNA, WO 281/1, General Routine Orders, 87 (a), NCOs Anti- Malarial Courses 1951.

⁶⁹ TNA, WO 281/1, General Routine Orders, 89, Prevention of Malaria- Troops in Korea Only.

deploy unless they were fully vaccinated.⁷⁰ This same policy applied to soldiers arriving in the Korean War, however, some attempted to use the situation to get out of fighting. Captain Charles Chester of the Northumberland Fusiliers found one of his men attempting to be sent home by refusing an inoculation:

I had this one soldier who the doctor thought was trying to get sent home before Korea with imaginary headaches. Now when we got to Singapore, we had our last inoculations and this chap turned up and said to the doctor, 'No, I'm not going to have it' and the doctor told him that he would get it or else he would have to be sent back and lose all his pensions. He replied 'I don't care, you know when I came up to you and you said I imagined those headaches? Well, you can bloody well imagine you've inoculated me!' I thought it was rather amusing I must say. The doctor turned around to me and demanded that I arrest him but I said, 'You arrest him, it's your affair, but he's coming either way.' He decided to get the shot after that. It turned out that he was a good lad after all, stayed with us right to the end.⁷¹

From what Chester describes, it appears that the soldier was malingering throughout his voyage to Korea in an attempt to be sent home. His final inoculation being required before he could be sent to the frontlines became the final chance in the man's attempts to be sent home. It appears that he was using the mandatory nature of the vaccine as a point of negotiation in his goal to be sent home, leveraging the army's policy against itself. Throughout the Second World War, Newlands found similar examples of men who tried and failed to use the army's regulation of body as a negotiation tool to escape service.⁷² In these instances, men would attempt to 'swing the lead' by cheating doctors with fake symptoms or exaggerated ill health.⁷³ Unfortunately for Chester's soldier refusing his inoculation, his attempt also failed when the Captain simply stated that he would be coming to Korea regardless after which point the man gave in. It would seem that some men were willing to adapt the ways the army sought to deal with the

⁷⁰ War Office, *Handbook of Military Hygiene*, (London, 1943), P. 24

⁷¹ Capt. Charles Chester, 1st Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, no date given, Lindsay Barker, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 21030), Reel 7.

⁷² E. Newlands, P. 43.

⁷³ Capt. R. Good, 'Malingering', *British Medical Journal*, (1942), P. 284.

environment to their own ends, however, the army's concern for the prevalence of tropical diseases in Korea seems to have indeed been well founded. Ben Whitchurch spoke of how even decades after the conflict had ended, veterans were still subject to concerns about what they may have picked up in Korea:

Two years ago, I hadn't been feeling too well and after a check-up I got a letter and I had to go away, up to London to have tropical diseases investigated, 50 years later! I said to this doctor 'Why 50 years later are we going for tropical disease tests?' He said 'Well, Far East you get these diseases and they can lie dormant in your body and the area you were; you could've picked it up and if it surfaced it'll kill you'. Fortunately, they said I haven't got any, but was a proper worry at the time.⁷⁴

We can see from what Whitchurch told the Imperial War Museum that the conditions they had faced in Korea still cast shadows on their lives for many years to come after the conflicts end. In his case, he found that the diseases he was potentially exposed to fighting in Korea still had the potential to cause harm half a century later. Although he turned out to be free of any long-term illness from the conflict, Whitchurch admitted that he was very worried about the matter when the possibility of death was raised to him by his doctor. Whitchurch was not the only soldier to face long term effects from the extreme conditions of the Korean environment, nor were the lasting effects all physical. John Davison spoke of how he was still haunted by memories of the Korean winter during cold snaps back home in Britain: 'Korea didn't really have all four seasons like, it was more summer then straight into the cold. During the winter it was bad... very bad. I still think of the memories whenever we get a cold snap'.⁷⁵ It is clear given the severity of the conditions British troops could face in Korea and the frequency that it resurfaces in their testimonies that it was a significant part of their experience on the peninsula.

⁷⁴ L/ Cpl. Benjamin Whitchurch, 1st Battalion, Gloucester Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 11/06/2003, Lindsey Baker, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 26098), Reel 6.

⁷⁵ Gnr. John Davison, 14th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (Interview with Drew James Ryder University Hospital of North Tees, 7/10/2017).

Whether soldiers faced the sub-forty degree cold of the Korean Winter or had to cope with preventative measures for exotic diseases, it all formed an important part of their memories of the conflict.

Conclusion

What is apparent from recollections of the Korean frontline environment is that for the infantry on the ground, the physical characteristics of the frontlines and the activities carried out in them seemed to be a continuity of the First World War experience. Despite the many features of the Korean environment which distinguish it as a unique challenge for the British Army in the 1950s, over and over again, the men on the ground related their experiences through touchstones and concepts of the Great War. From this it would further seem that Sheffield's model of the First World War's influence on the lives of troops in the Second World War is indeed a model that can be applied to Korea. Especially given as the physical similarities of trench life appear to have been genuinely reflective of the First World War, from the point of view of the infantry in Korea.⁷⁶ What this tells us about wider society at the time is that in 1950, the imagery of warfare was still overwhelmingly dominated by narratives of the First World War. Whilst fighting in Second World War, particularly in the Far East, may seem to better fit the model of Korea in hindsight and from a strategic point of view, it is clear that the cultural narrative of these more recent events had not yet developed in a way to sway wider societies perception of a 'frontline'. The ways in which Korea veterans recount daily activities of life on the Korean frontlines, such as maintaining hygiene and maintaining their positions were almost exact parallels of First World War experiences described by Winter.⁷⁷ They describe being made to 'Stand To' in the

⁷⁶ G. D. Sheffield, PP. 27- 39.

⁷⁷ D. Winter, PP. 81- 82

way of soldiers in 1916, reacted to the presence of death in similar ways and even entrenched themselves using the same tools as would have been familiar to their forebears. Hygiene was maintained to similar standards as had been in both the First and Second World Wars and just as in the mythology of the First World War, British soldiers in Korea faced rats and vermin, down to the detail of killing them with bayonets. Soldiers in Korea even experienced the same fears and anxieties towards shelling and bombardment as had men in the First World War as described by Roper.⁷⁸ As if to underline the similarities in recollections to the First World War front there was even a recognised dangerous 'no man's land' between the opposing lines by 1952. In terms of physical attributes, the no man's land in Korea was also very similar to that experienced on the 1914- 1918 Western Front. Soldiers raided and patrolled the space in the same way, encountered similar hazards and reacted in a similar manner. Although the Korean environment between the lines presented British troops with fewer dead bodies than the First World War, other elements pressed the similarity further. There could even be temporary truces and allowances made in the face of wounding as there had been in World War One.⁷⁹ There were of course fresh challenges posed to British troops by the environment of Korea. Men had to face blistering extremes in weather conditions generated by Korea's unique geography. Siberian storms forced men to improvise emergency ways of fighting off the effects of the extreme cold and summer heatwaves raised the threat of diseases which plagued soldiers for decades after the war's end. Yet despite this, men still continually defined their experience of the Korean Environment in terms of the First World War. The environment therefore represents a key element of the Korean War in which the strategic view and old military histories have simply failed to convey the

⁷⁸ M. Roper, PP. 1-3

⁷⁹ Ibid.

experience of the men on the ground fighting which they have portrayed through their testimony. Through this paradigm, although Korea was strange and new, it was seen by the infantry an element of continuation in soldiers' experience throughout the Twentieth Century.

Chapter 4: The Combat Experience in Korea.

A New Perspective of Killing

Perhaps the most definitive aspects in a soldier's experience of warfare are the acts of combat and killing. This was a conclusion reached early on in the development of new military histories and since then a great deal of writing has been dedicated by many authors into examining just how the experience of killing impacted the soldier on the ground. John Ellis was amongst the earliest of the new military historians who examined soldiers' experience of combat and fighting with *The Sharp End*.¹ What he found in his examination of the Second World War, was that initially popular memories of the conflict at the time were shaped not by the minority of troops who had faced combat on the front lines but by the majority of men whose service had been in support and 'impersonal' combat roles. Therefore, where the memories of the First World War had produced connotations of the horrors of the trenches, those of the later conflict produced fonder allusions to overseas travel and recollections of excessive military regimentation. As Ellis himself put it, 'World War I gave us *Journey's End*, World War II gave us *South Pacific*'.² Since then, with thanks to the efforts made by Ellis and many other new military historians, as well as a shift in pop culture depictions of the conflict that imbalance has largely been redressed in cultural imagery of the Second World War. However, his findings in the 1970s on the difference in cultural approach to the two World Wars are particularly pertinent to a study of the fighting experience in Korea. In this time, a considerable body of new military and oral history has since been dedicated to an examination of the soldier's experience of killing.

¹ J. Ellis, *The Sharp End, The Fighting Man in World War II*, (London, 1980), PP. 53- 116.

² Ibid, P. 53.

Joanna Bourke's works in particular are highly significant in this field. Bourke was one of the primary figures who drove the act of killing back to the centre in studies of frontline experience. Particularly with, *An Intimate History of Killing*, she highlighted the ways in which men responded to and coped with killing were central to military service and could be as bloody and horrific as the act of killing itself, coining the phrase, 'intimate killing'.³ Of course, many others have also committed a great deal of research into this subject area. Indeed, with so much writing dedicated to this area of a soldier's experience, why investigate killing and combat in Korea? Surely fighting the Chinese and North Koreans in 1951 cannot be so different from fighting the Germans in 1916? Yet for all the ubiquities of the experience, the Korean War does present a new perspective on this aspect of a soldier's life, for similar reasons to those found by Ellis in 1980. Killing and the recounting combat experience are, naturally, quite difficult subject to broach in conversation, with an interviewer or otherwise. There are good reasons why the myth of the archetypal veteran never speaking about the war is so prevalent. As a species and a society, we are programmed to have certain views and apprehensions about killing another human. It is quite literally a taboo subject. As mentioned, there has been a great deal of work attributed to the study of soldiers' personal experiences of fighting and killing. One of the primary findings of Joanna Bourke's works has been the emotional weight soldiers can attach to the act of killing.⁴ According to Bourke, combatants in the First and Second World War, as well as the Vietnam Conflict, often adopted some form of an emotional responsibility to those they have killed. In some instances, this was reflected by imagined relationships and fantasies, such as soldiers 'seeing the faces' of men

³ J. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male, Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, (London, 1996); J. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing, Face to Face with Killing in the Twentieth Century*, (London, 1999).

⁴ J. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, P. xix.

they had killed, real or otherwise.⁵ This emotional responsibility and personalising of the opponent reflected an apologetic guilt and was a key barrier from the full psychological effects of killing. As if by being remorseful for their actions, the soldier could be spared from their own judgement. Alternatively, soldiers studied in these conflicts could delve into a deep moral integrity to balance against emotional weight.⁶ In what was essentially an extension of the 'just following orders' rationale, combatants rationalised their acts of killing as a necessity on behalf of their own military institutions and thus distinguish the lives they took in combat from murder. However, there seems to be a difference in how veterans of Korea viewed the act of killing as opposed to how killing is spoken of in the European Wars of the Twentieth Century. This is because there is a cultural sanctity and reverence with which killing during the World Wars and other major conflicts must be approached. Dating back to what material reached the home front between 1914 and 1918, killing and death were shown either as morbid horrors meant to shock through depictions such as poetry and paintings, or filtered and sanitised in footage reels. In this latter category, consisting of 'socially acceptable' deaths and wounding, a soldier would for example, simply fall down in the mid distance of a grainy shot, or a body would be seen with a clean shot to the heart. Even the language used by veterans surrounding death in the First World War became more sanitary and shied away from putrefaction.⁷ The Korean War on the other hand, is another story. As a result of the subsequent apathy towards the conflict, fighting there received no such cultural courtesy. For British culture and society, the Korean War has always seemed remote and far away. The result of this is that veterans are able to give their thoughts on killing and combat far more freely than

⁵⁵ Ibid, P. xviii; William Simon, 'My Country', in L. Rottmann, J. Barry & B. Paquet (eds.), *Winning Hearts and Minds. War Poems by Vietnam Veterans*, (New York, 1972), P. 42.

⁶ J. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, P. xix.

⁷ J. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, P. 222.

if discussing other conflicts. The Korean War is so culturally remote compared to the battlefields of France and Europe, that many of the taboos become less imposing.

Views of the Enemy

One of the other main reasons that soldiers are able to talk so openly of killing in Korea is because of the predominant views they held of their enemy at the time. As has been established, in the minds of most British soldiers heading out to Korea, the predominant popular imagery of warfare was one of a European World War. The North Korean and Chinese soldiers faced by the British Army in Korea represented a very different enemy to the archetypical white European opponent commonplace in imagery of the World Wars. This was a view predicated on the fact that the North Korean and Chinese soldiers they faced were in many ways alien to British troops. This was a multi-faceted view, influenced by many underlying elements, including racial prejudices, views on communism and general attitudes towards the conflict. Partially, this was driven by racial and colonial thinking. A reoccurring theme throughout the oral testimonies of veterans is the view that Asian people in general and the Koreans in particular were backwards and less advanced than the British. Ronald Larby, a British signaller with the Commonwealth Division Signals Regiment, summarised this view both in a written memoir and orally to the Imperial War Museum. When he described the city of Pusan where his battalion had disembarked, he attributed the state of disrepair to a lack of British influence:

If you look at Hong Kong, Aden, Singapore, those places, with having the British influence, all the buildings were tidy and smart, the streets were white, but the thing that struck you about Pusan, it wasn't like that at all. It was just a jumble, a mess, you know, dusty and dirty and dingy.⁸

⁸ Pte. Ronald Larby, 14th Field Signal Troop, Commonwealth Division Signals Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 31/1/1999, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 18199), Reel 2.

The racial undertones are very clear from his description of white streets in British influenced ports, contrasting with the dust, dirt and dingy he describes Pusan. His view of Korea can easily be split into Britishness, which he considers clean and tidy and non-British, which was dirty and lesser. Larby was even more direct in his written memoir, 'The Colonial Orderliness of the British Empire, on which the sun may be setting, was a damn sight more civilised than this hole' as well as describing Koreans as 'dirty and shabby'.⁹ Similarly, many veterans of the Second World War were quick to point out the brutal reputation of Korean soldiers serving as Japanese Prison camps and remembered this through their time in Korea.¹⁰ There were also many veterans of Korea who viewed the conflict and their enemy with an attitude fitting Britain's colonial conflicts of the previous century. Contrary to views on European opponents who were intrinsically familiar and whose deaths in the World Wars were therefore a sad necessity, the colonial attitude reduced the North Koreans and Chinese to uncivilised barbarians, reducing their humanity and with it any remorse at their deaths. Many soldiers were sceptical of the enemy's own agency in why they fought. Rumours were commonplace amongst British and UN troops that the Chinese and North Koreans were only able to motivate their men to fight through by drugging them or threatening them with execution and torture.¹¹ Not only did this discredit any reasoning and agency the enemy may have had for fighting, it further aligned them with ideas of barbarity and incivility.

⁹ R. Larby, *Signals to the Right, Armoured Corp to the Left*, (Leamington Spa, 1993), P. 88 & PP. 90- 91.

¹⁰ S. Kelly, *British Soldiers of the Korean War in Their Own Words*, (Briscombe Port, 2013).

¹¹ Sgt. Leslie Maynard Winspear, Sniper and Intelligence Section, 1st Battalion, Duke of Wellington's Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 6/2/2001, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 21593), Reel 3.

Alexander Wilson, then Commanding Officer of A Company of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and veteran of the Second World War, recalled his experience of the difference between the frontline and the rear.

It was less than 24 hours difference between civilisation and the fighting on the frontline to the North, it reminded me very strongly of parachuting over Normandy, one night one was in a nice area with a good mess, the next you were under gunfire, it was very odd.¹²

In his recollection, Wilson very clearly differentiates the 'civilised', 'nice areas' with the fighting on the frontline. By drawing this line, Wilson was implying that the South Koreans and the UN forces behind the frontline were civilised, and therefore that from the frontlines northward into communist territory was uncivilised. In this description we can see overtones of old imperial ways of thinking, including the notion of an uncivilised frontier being held back by the British. In this case, the 'thin red line' is between the civilised South and the uncivil North. This is noteworthy because Wilson is specifically equating uncivility with the 'North', i.e. the Communist forces, and not with the racial identity of Korea in general. This was to the extent that Wilson equated the difference between South Korea and North Korea to the difference between Britain and fighting during the Battle of Normandy during the Second World War. Given that this was not an uncommon view of both the Korean people and by extension, the North Korean enemy, it helps to explain why some veterans had relatively little difficulty in recounting killing and combat with such casual irreverence.

However, it is worth pointing out that this mindset was not universal and racial thinking can only go so far to explain the view British troops held of the enemy.

¹² Gen. Alexander D. R. G. Wilson, A Coy, 1st Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 01/03/1993, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 18699, Reel 2.

Although many soldiers admitted there was little way for them to tell between a hostile North Korean and a friendly South Korean, many also viewed the Korean people with a great deal of sympathy and were careful to differentiate between the civilians they encountered and hostile military forces.¹³ Brigadier Kenneth Trevor, then a Staff Officer with the 27th British Infantry Brigade, was not unusual in his expressions of sympathy to Korean Civilians:

The refugees came with only what they had piled on them and their children. It was very sad. it was the depths of winter when they came. I'm told some broke the ice and drowned with their children... Very tragic. They must have been in very dire straits. It was interesting to me why they were trying to escape from their own people, it certainly didn't say much for the communists if they were all trying to escape them.¹⁴

We can see that Trevor had a clear definition in his view between the Korean refugees, towards whom he shows a great deal of pity and sympathy and the communist forces driving them south. This differentiation demonstrates that it was not only a universal racial bias that shaped British troops views of the enemy, but that other factors must have been at play. A major component of this was way in which British soldiers were able to brand the enemy as 'communists', as Trevor stated. This is one of the few areas of the experience of the war where the Cold War rhetoric of capitalists versus communists is clearly presented. Leslie Winspear, reflected that he viewed the enemy purely in terms of a hostile ideology: 'I was very much in favour of the democratic principle and communism was certainly totalitarian, so as far as I was concerned it had to be resisted'.¹⁵ To an extent, this seems to have been both a political stance and an easy branding of the enemy. Communism represented an easy way to define an enemy composed

¹³ Pte. Charles Herbert Sharpling, A coy, Signals Platoon, 1st Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 2/2/1999, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 18544), Reel 1.

¹⁴ Brig. Kenneth Rowland Swetenham Taylor, Staff Officer, 27th British Infantry Brigade, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 12/5/1987, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 9784), Reel 3.

¹⁵ Sgt. Leslie Maynard Winspear, (IWM 21593), Reel 5.

of two armies and sharing a great deal of culture with the civilian population. However, it also underpins one way in which veterans were more freely able to discuss fighting and killing the North Koreans and Chinese. By defining the enemy as representing a dangerous ideology, in a similar way to calling the Germans Nazis in the Second World War, Korea veterans can rationalise their actions as being for the greater good. In short, the Chinese and North Koreans were simply strange to British soldiers. They represented cultures, ideology and military practices which the average British Soldier had little to no experience of. Whilst a certain amount of the post-World War narratives focused on the similarities between British and German troops, the Communist Forces in Korea had no easily relatable touchstones for men to latch onto. Without any way to actively relate to hostile forces and coupled with a general distaste for enemy tactics and racial undertones, the view of the enemy presented by British troops makes it much easier to discuss the acts fighting and killing than with other more studied conflicts.

Killing and the Dehumanised Enemy

One of the primary characteristics of open combat in the Korean War, especially following the Chinese intervention, was that it was generally fought at long range across valleys, often at night. This meant that for the most part, British soldiers in Korea were less likely to see effects of their fire up close until after the fight, if they were able to bear witness to it at all. This is not to say that death itself was a distant concept, but rather that fighting in these circumstances took on a more impersonal characteristic. Private Charles Sharpling recounted a typical engagement of this kind with Chinese troops in 1951. His unit's hilltop position was attacked multiple times by Chinese and North Korean forces, always at night:

We were always having skirmishes at night with them. They'd try and slip through the lines. When they attacked, they just shouted to each other, so we'd fire at the noise and hope we'd pick them off. That night I think we killed about seven or eight of them. In the morning, we found one chap

leant up against a tree, the Chinese must have missed him. He was dead as a dodo but his eyes were still open. I stopped to look at him, he was just stood there; he had his blurp gun just like he was carrying his golfing bag and he was young too. He'd died so suddenly his eyes were still open.¹⁶

Sharpling's main recollection of combat with the Chinese and North Koreans shows how separate the individual soldier could be from the act of killing in combat. Because the enemy forces primarily attacked his unit's position at night, Sharpling and his comrades resorted to firing at noises, rather than visually aiming for a human being. As a result, there is no way that Sharpling or any other soldier could be exactly sure how many people he had killed in the fight, if any at all. As Sharpling said, he thought that his platoon had killed 'seven or eight', but he could not be sure. This was partially compounded by the Chinese policy of removing their dead from the field when possible, meaning that British soldiers were another step further removed from the act of killing. As a result, when Sharpling did finally see an enemy he may have killed, his reaction was more curiosity than any kind of remorse or reverence, nonchalantly describing how the body carried its 'blurp gun' like a golfing bag for example.¹⁷ In other instances, it was simply the distance between the engagement which provided a separation between the act of fighting and the act of killing. This was especially the case in the latter stages of the conflict, a period characterised by static entrenched warfare reminiscent of the fighting on the Western Front of the First World War. In some places, the resulting 'no-man's land' extended for a considerable distance between United Nations' positions and their Chinese and North Korean counterparts. Winspear, who had by this point been promoted to corporal, spend a significant portion of this time with an Intelligence and Sniping section. At some point during this period he was part

¹⁶ Pte. Charles Herbert Sharpling, (IWM 18544), Reel 1.

¹⁷ 'Blurp Gun' was a common slang term used by British troops in reference to the high rate of fire of Soviet supplied sub-machine guns used by the Chinese and North Koreans.

of an impromptu experiment firing anti-tank rockets at Chinese positions across a valley and recounted the event in almost unconcerned terms:

We were experimenting with our anti-tank rockets to see what the effect would be on the Chinese machine gun nests. The backwash made it impractical and because of all the smoke we could never really tell what effect they had, but given how accurate they were I'm almost certain that the rocket went into the embrasure and destroyed the gun, but you could never see for sure.¹⁸

The technicalities of firing the rocket were of more immediate concern in Winspear's recollection than the possibility of killing Chinese soldiers, which highlights the point that Winspear viewed the action as something cold and detached, with no reference to possible casualties. This is not necessarily crassness, rather that his recollection of the event was defined by what he could actually see as a target, that being an inanimate emplacement, rather than an occupied enemy position. The calmness of his reaction and the seeming disregard potentially killing demonstrates how the distance and the unseen nature of the enemy, made the concept of the individual opponent irrelevant. The gun's crew became merely an extension of the physical machinegun, which was the only visible target. In these regards, the inability to closely visualise an individual opponent made the act of combat seem separate from the act of actively killing another human being. To an extent, the experience of the British soldier fighting in Korea in these circumstances becomes more similar to the fighter and bomber pilots of the Second World War who also fought at a distance to the enemy. Martin Francis's work on the accounts of RAF aircrew in the 1940s, found that because their visualisation of the enemy was not human, but an aircraft or a distant ground target, they were often able to separate the act of combat from the act of killing.¹⁹ These pilots and bombardiers were able to reassure themselves that their targets

¹⁸ Sgt. Leslie Maynard Winspear, (IWM 21593), Reel 3.

¹⁹ M. Francis, *The Flyer*, PP. 172- 173.

were purely strategic and therefore distance themselves from the human cost. It appears from their testimony that a similar phenomenon was at work for British Soldiers in Korea.

This would seem to suggest that in cases where the individuality of the enemy was stripped away, British soldiers became less prone to experiencing an emotional reaction. This was true of the effects of fighting at extreme range and at night, however it would also seem to be the case when combat occurred against visible enemy forces in overwhelming numbers. On many occasions, United Nations troops encountered 'human wave' attacks from Chinese and North Korean forces. The basic principle of the human wave tactic was a huge direct assault of densely concentrated infantry against an enemy position, without any attempts to shield or to mask the attacking force's movement. The effectiveness of the attack was as much psychological as it was physical and it was typical of Chinese assaults following their entry to the war. To an extent, these massed attacks against UN trenches and defensive positions were reminiscent of the manoeuvres employed amidst the trenches of the First World War, however, no one in Korea glorified them as a 'wild rush in the highland tradition' as had happened then.²⁰ John Grosvenor, a private who was with the Gloucesters during the infamous Battle of Imjin, fought against one of the largest waves attacks of the war and recounted that his unit 'had to fire more or less continually at the attack, just as fast as you could kill them, there was just more and more coming'.²¹ To soldiers like Grosvenor, fighting in the mountains and valleys of Korea, the sheer number of enemy soldiers made them seem more like a physical force or tide, rather than as

²⁰ E. O'Dowd, *Chinese Military Strategy in the Third Indochina War*, (New York, 2007), P. 145; J. Bourke, P. 46.

²¹ Pte. J. Grosvenor, 1st Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment, 29th Infantry Brigade, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 21/11/1995, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 16337), Reel 1.

a mass of individual soldiers. This is reflected most clearly in how veterans refer to the attacks. Instead of referring to the enemy in human terms, the soldiers who faced wave attacks describe their enemy simply as 'waves' or, in Grosvenor's case, simply 'the attack'. All elements of individual humanity in the attackers were stripped away by the sheer volume of their numbers. In the desperation created by such an offensive, defending troops fought to survive as much as to kill. As a result, their reaction to the experience could become equally as detached. Fredrick Thompson recalled his reaction to combat and killing during desperate night-fighting for a key position on the east flank of the Imjin battlefield:

We manned a Bren gun and we used up all our ammunition, fourteen completely full magazines, in just half an hour. We counted at least thirty bodies on the forward slope. I don't recall feeling anything else other than the realisation that you were a professional, doing what professionals had to do, given those circumstances. There was no time to think of the situation, or of the people behind and around you. They may all be dead and you are the only one in the world left in that slip trench, firing away.²²

Thompson, like Grosvenor, was faced with an overwhelming number of enemy combatants. He and a squad mate fired a powerful automatic weapon at the Chinese forces for a prolonged period.²³ Thompson was not spared the results of his actions and witnessed a large number of bodies lying in front of his position as a direct result of his fire. Despite this, Thompson remained unemotional in his reaction and viewed his actions as strictly professional. His reaction and recollection of how he fought and killed in that battle, is highly informative of how British soldier's experienced fighting against human wave attacks in Korea. Fighting against human waves became less about fighting the individual foes and became more about halting an impersonal wave of opposition. Both Grosvenor and Thompson's reactions to the human wave was such that it became almost an

²² Sgt. Fredrick Thompson, Signal Coy, 1st Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 4/8/1999, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 18772), Reel 4.

²³ The Bren Light Machinegun was a fast firing automatic weapon used by British Forces from the Second World War through to the First Gulf War.

inanimate thing, not a force composed of human beings, but an abstract concept. What is more, Thompson further separated himself from the act of killing personally, by invoking the professional status of a soldier. By doing this and framing his combat experience as 'a professional, doing what professionals had to do', Thompson is reflecting a reaction found often in soldiers of other conflicts. Bourke and many others, have discussed how soldiers can enter into a cold 'agentic mode', whereby a soldier places the barrier of their institution between their actions and moral or emotional responsibility.²⁴ Soldiers 'Do what they must', just as Thompson 'did what he had to do'. However, these cases all stem from conflicts with a much greater emotional expectation attached to them. In the World Wars and Vietnam there is an element of human tragedy produced by the cultural representations of these wars. Soldiers are expected to have emotional and human reactions in these cases. For British troops in Korea who fought at range, at night or against the sheer volume of the human wave, there was no individuality to the enemy soldier. Additionally, because of the disinterest society has shown to Korea in the years since the conflicts end, there is no perceived need to show an emotional attachment to the enemy either. Therefore, in these circumstances, the testimony of Korea veterans can provide new perspectives on the acts of killing and combat not seen in similar oral histories from more well studied conflicts.

Killing and the Humanised Enemy

One area of combat in Korea which generated a highly personal response to killing were instances of close-range engagements in which soldiers were able to visualise an enemy on an individual level. Although they were not the majority of engagements, close quarters engagements were not entirely uncommon for British

²⁴ J. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, PP 203- 229; D. Mantell & R. Panzarella, 'Obedience and Responsibility', *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 15:1, (1976), PP. 239- 245.

troops to experience throughout the conflict. Fighting on these occasions took place at minimal range and in some instances, in broad daylight. In such conditions, there were no situational circumstances to hide or otherwise diminish the humanity of the enemy from British soldiers. Fighting like this took place throughout the Korean War, in urban environments, in between lines on combat patrols and even in brutal trench fights reminiscent of the First World War. One such occasion of a close quarters melee was recounted by Private Robert Searle. Whilst serving with a mortar platoon of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, Searle's convoy accidentally ran into a lost North Korean unit in the village of Sariwon:

We pulled into this village and it was full of North Koreans and we assumed they must be prisoners. We had a tank with this white star and the Koreans were pointing to it and saying 'Ruskies' and we ended up mingling. We were stood around trying to swap badges. In the end, our Sergeant clocked it and started telling us to get back to the Bren Carriers. They must have realised too because one of theirs pulled the trigger and killed the Sergeant and all hell broke loose, shots going every which way. Our tanks opened fire, they had about four machine guns each and it was just terrible. There was one Korean I remember, a huge hulking man, tried to dive away but my phosphorous grenade got him and he was just gone.²⁵

In instances such as this where the enemy were clearly visible, soldiers like Searle clearly had a more emotional reaction to combat. Not only was Searle faced with the death of his Sergeant and witnessing a volley from the tanks at close range, but he also saw the effect of his own grenade on a human being in very immediate terms. The boundary between, person, soldier and enemy had very much been diminished both in the physical sense of distance and in the emotional and personal sense. The man Searle killed with a grenade clearly stood out as an individual person. Searle was able to clearly recall details which made the man stand out from other North Korean soldiers, as well as the specific type of grenade

²⁵ Pte. Robert Searle, Mortar Platoon, 1st Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 18/7/1998, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 18470), Reel 2.

he threw to kill him and the manner in which the Korean had tried to dive away.²⁶ Unlike instances where troops had engaged at long range or with poor visibility, Searle had been in close enough to visually individualise the man and possibly even have tried to swap memorabilia with him moments earlier. The language used by Searle to describe the killing, as opposed to the combat, further highlights the effect the personalisation of the enemy had. He describes the close quarters fighting as 'hell let loose' and the effect of seeing the British tanks open fire on the massed North Koreans as 'terrible'. He even recalled the absence of a body from his own grenade blast as if something was wrong or amiss, as if he were expecting more tangible results of killing a man. This is a tremendous contrast from words of men fighting in more impersonal combat settings, where upon the bodies of the enemy and the effects of fire upon them were a curious detail. Clearly, in cases of close-range fighting, with no way of obscuring the humanity of the enemy, veterans of Korea were more likely to have the same highly emotional reactions to combat and killing as seen in other conflicts.²⁷

Veterans of the Korean War could also display surprising reactions to killing enemies, even those who were individualised. Some of the men who spoke of their experiences even recalled feeling surprising emotional reactions such as feelings of intense thrill and pleasure. This may seem counter intuitive to commonly held notions of combat and fighting. It would be expected that entering into battle represented a wholly nightmarish experience in which men universally lamented their actions and regretted what they had done. However, the opposite was just what some individuals described. Ashley Cunningham-Boothe had volunteered with his friends to be deployed to Korea with the Northumberland

²⁶ Phosphorous grenades, unlike more common fragmentation grenades, are incendiary weapons which kill through burning as well as blast damage.

²⁷ J. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, PP. 207- 213.

Fusiliers. When he recounted his record of the advance north in 1950, he suddenly confessed his feelings towards fighting and combat:

I have to say that I discovered within my make-up an unpleasant part of me that enjoyed parts of the war... I enjoyed killing people. It was a good feeling. In fact, one of the strongest impressions I have, was once a battle was over and you're sitting there having a mug of tea and a cigarette and you're exchanging your experiences and the honesty that you find in that brief moment in time is incredible. The fact that there was enjoyment in it must seem to be extraordinary to one who has not been in a war situation, but to me it was just natural to be the way I was, because that's the way we all were as soldiers. We were there to kill the enemy and we did it. The adrenaline rush and the sense of having been in a major battle and survived, it's a shot like nothing, I imagine that even cocaine couldn't vie with it for an experience. I imagine it's a bit like being a gladiator, being in the arena and beating your adversary. My friends say they feel the same way, John and Martin told me how much they miss the adrenaline of being in action, they'd be back there tomorrow like I would.²⁸

The manner in which Cunningham-Boothe expressed his feelings implied that this was partly a confession and partly reminiscence. Whilst he expresses guilt for feeling the way he did, describing it as an unpleasant part of himself, he also admits to feeling a tremendous joy in the act of fighting and specifically killing. He describes it as being like a narcotic shot, addictive and a pleasurable experience from engaging in the fight itself, to the thrill of surviving and the joy of reliving it with his comrades. Cunningham-Boothe's experience of combat may seem unusual and he even suggested himself that it must seem extraordinary, however it is not a unique phenomenon. Countless other examples of soldiers who enjoyed combat and killing have been collected throughout the course of new military histories. Bourke found many examples of men from all backgrounds in the First World War who found the act of killing an enemy to be 'gorgeously satisfying' and as late as Vietnam who described being 'happier than they ever had been' when

²⁸ RSM. Ashley Cunningham-Boothe, 1st Battalion, Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 08/12/1999, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 19913), Reel 4.

going into combat.²⁹ Similarly to how Cunningham-Boothe suggested killing had a rush like narcotics, Bourke describes examples of soldiers who had intense highs from fighting, even in almost sexual terms, like how Cunningham-Boothe spoke of enjoying a cigarette afterwards.³⁰ The immediate reminiscing of combat also has historic precedent. During their efforts to promote material related to Armistice celebrations, a German veteran of the First World War spoke to the BBC about how, after storming a French position, his comrades revelled in surviving and boasted of what they had done: 'They were absolutely undisturbed by what we had done. One of them boasted that he had killed a Frenchman with the butt of his rifle, another laughed that he had strangled a captain, a third one hit someone over the head with his spade'.³¹ Cunningham-Boothe's friends told him years later that they felt the same way and would gladly return to combat. For these men infantry combat was an exhilarating sport, like gladiatorial combat in which they pushed themselves to the physical limit and defeated enemies for the prize of living.

Mechanised Killing

The experience of the act of killing could be drastically different for British soldiers who operated in other combat roles. The infantryman's perspective of killing was particularly affected by how they were able to visualise the enemy. The more individualised an enemy soldier became, the more intense the emotional reaction to the act of killing. Whilst this may be true for soldiers on the ground, it seems that the experience was very different for armoured crews fighting in Korea. British tank

²⁹ J. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, P. 19; 'Anzac', *On the ANZAC Trail. Being Extracts from the Diary of a New Zealand Sapper*, (London, 1916) P. 121; Lt. Col. Neil Tytler, *Field Guns in France*, (London, 1922), P. 35; Gary McKay, *In Good Company. One Man's War in Vietnam*, (Sydney, 1987), P. 162.

³⁰ J. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, P. 19- 22.

³¹ 'Tales From the Trenches- Armistice Day', *BBC Rewind*, [<https://armistice-day.bbcrewind.co.uk/interviews>], last accessed, 14th November 2018.

crews fighting in the Korean War fought and killed their enemies through an entirely different interface to how infantry fought. Unlike infantry, they were not fighting on level terms with the enemy as but instead engaged in battle through a fully encased machine. They acted in technical roles as a part of both their crew and the tank itself. Unlike the fighting which had taken place between 1939 and 1945, armoured warfare in Korea rarely involved engaging with enemy tanks. As a result, tank crews were more usually involved in either in-direct fire support roles, similar to mobile artillery, or in some cases, direct assault against enemy infantry. In these latter cases, the power afforded to British armoured crews against Chinese troops lacking any form of effective anti-tank weaponry, could create a drastically different experience of combat from the exposed infantry fighting on foot. Captain Dowling, who had served with C Company of the 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars, told his regimental journal of his involvement in a relief action at the Battle Imjin in 1951:

Infantrymen were falling like flies under the close quarters fire. The rest of our tanks had forced their way down the last lap of the valley through milling Chinamen. They reported that they could see an estimated two thousand or more, swarming down the western hillsides from the heights where they had been held up all day. Our Centurions came through, crushing enemy under their tracks. Sgt. Cadman found a Chinaman battering at our turret to get in and directed the tank straight through the wall of a house, to brush him off and then ran over an M.G. post beside the road. We then found what must have been three platoons of Infantry in parade-ground order coming out of the river bed and they were blown to confusion with some of the last ammunition our tanks carried. Some tanks took to the paddy and were ploughing-in communists, crouched under every bank. The firing was a continuous iron rain on the outside of the tanks.³²

There are two elements to Dowling's experience of fighting at the Imjin which speak to the fact that his view of the enemy was notably different from that of the infantry who had fought the Chinese and North Koreans on foot. Firstly, is the extent to which fighting as part of a tank crew made the combat more impersonal

³² Capt. B. Dowling, 'C Company at the Imjin', *'Crossbelts', Regimental Journal of the VIII King's Royal Irish Hussars 1950- 1951*, (Imperial War Museum catalogue LBY K. 71433).

as a result of Dowling being just one part of a multi- person crew, all of whom were required to operate the centurion tank. When he talks of who was involved in the act of killing, he refers to the tanks themselves, not himself or the other crew manning them. He does not state 'I' or 'we' killed, but 'the Centurions' or 'the tanks'. Evidently, in his mind, it was the tanks which were killing, not the people operating them. Naturally, this changed his perspective of his combat experience as it negated individual responsibility for the act of killing and made it a group effort. His actions were not his own as an isolated individual, but were taken as a part of a multitude, through a machine. In this way, fighting as a tanker Dowling was able to separate his own individuality from the act of killing. Bourke described how soldiers in Vietnam and the Second World War also behaved in this way, albeit on a wider scale. These men could kill with less emotional conscious when it was done on behalf of a group or institution.³³ It seems that this was playing out on a smaller scale here, as Dowling viewed his actions on behalf of the tanks themselves, rather than as an individual. Secondly, there is the extent to which the technological nature of armoured warfare and the manner in which Dowling and his comrades fought made his view of killing Chinese soldiers much less personal and distanced from seeing them as human beings. He describes the killing that took place as if he viewed the attacking enemy as little more than a nuisance, graphically describing how they 'fell like flies'. Similarly, the manner in which he describes his tank being driven nonchalantly through a building to clear off Chinese infantry highlights just how separate is role within the tank made him feel from the human element of the battle. The virtual invulnerability of the armoured crews and the technical way in which they faced operated allowed these men to approach the battle in practical, unromantic terms. In this regard, the tank crew

³³ J. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing* P. xix.

fighting in Korea were similar to the aircrews who had fought in the Second World War. Their experience and engagement with combat was not done on the ground with a rifle, but through technology, machinery and science. Martian Francis analysed how this separation from fighting, through tasks and skills which were more akin to an engineer than an infantryman, produced a combatant with a very different take on traditional views of warfare.³⁴ Similarly, Dowling talked about how his armoured squadron engaged a huge force of Chinese troops as if it were agricultural work. Although it is disturbing to see 'ploughing in' used as analogy for running down and killing enemy soldiers, it highlights just how far above the outside enemy tank crews could view themselves. As Bourke put it of the World Wars, technology provided a means to facilitate human destruction to such a scale as to reduce it to a business like a stockyard.³⁵

Reacting to Fear in Combat

As much as the act of killing, fearing the potential to be killed or wounded was the greatest hallmark of the experience of combat. Reacting to combat through fear is well observed in the experience of soldiers throughout history.³⁶ Accordingly the soldier's experience of fear has been present and accounted for in new military histories since the school's earliest days. John Ellis noted that fear was a constant presence in the Second World War combatant's experience and that being 'scared shitless all the time' was a commonplace reaction for combat troops. In the Pacific theatre for example, up to 84% of US troops reported feeling fear to an extent that it impaired their combat capability to some extent.³⁷ Although there have been no

³⁴ M. Francis, *The Flyer*, P. 163.

³⁵ J. Bourke, P. xviii.

³⁶ 'Tracing Combat Stress through History', *Post Trauma Institute of Louisiana*, [<https://www.posttraumainstitute.com/tracing-combat-stress-through-history/>], last accessed 23rd February 2018; J. Ellis, *The Sharp End*, PP. 102- 103.

³⁷ Ibid.

similar comparative studies to the ones quoted by Ellis done on Korea, fear is also brought often in the testimony of Korea veterans. More recently, Emma Newlands approached the experience of fear, wounding and death for the British soldier in the Second World War, mainly through the paradigm of the body. The primary themes Newlands uncovered in examining soldiers' testimonies, was that in the face of wounding, death and fear in combat, men had no uniform reaction though it was experienced in some way by all combatants. Some soldiers suffered very negative emotions as would be expected and yet for a great many, the essence of combat activities meant either little, or in some cases became a source of joy.³⁸ Newlands's work is an area of study aptly applied to the experience of men in the Korean War, who, despite fighting a different enemy in a different field, also exhibited similar reactions to combat, death and killing.³⁹ Although the scale of the conflict faced by the British Army in Korea was much smaller than the events of the World Wars, it was still an intense combat experience, with a far higher percentage of troops deployed suffering casualties. It is difficult to come to an exact percentage figure of casualty rates, due to incomplete records of the number of British troops who served in Korea, however it can be estimated between 5% to 10%, as opposed to 3.3% for the Second World War.⁴⁰ In short, soldiers in Korea had ample reason to experience fear of wounding or death in combat, just as much as during the Second World War. British troops in Korea were clearly very well aware of the threat of wounding and death in combat upon their arrival to the frontline. Physical manifestations of fear in these cases were common

³⁸ E. Newlands, *Civilians into Soldiers, The Body and British Army Recruits, 1939-45*, (Manchester, 2014), PP. 116- 183.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Anthony Farrar- Hockley, *The British Part in the Korean War, Volume I, A Distant Obligation*, (London, 1990); 'Britain's Forgotten War', *BBC News*, [<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/1285708.stm>], last accessed 3rd January 2020; J. Ellis, P. 364.

occurrences in soldiers throughout the war and were found in both new arrivals to the frontline and veterans of combat. Winspear recalled how one new soldier reacted to being picked to join the battalion's intelligence section, a unit which often had to engage in highly dangerous operations between the frontlines:

I was picking men for the intelligence section out of the reinforcements. I took a couple and as it came to be, we had this one man, a National Serviceman who used to be an engine driver, who was so afraid of his situation that he developed a severe bedwetting problem from that night onwards.⁴¹

Winspear describes how the National Serviceman he had picked from a batch of new reinforcements reacted with a physical manifestation of fear as soon as he was picked for a combat intensive role. Intelligence sections of a battalion were often involved in highly dangerous roles on top of regular combat duties. This included activities such as mapping minefields and traps, scouting and patrolling between allied and enemy lines, often crossing the latter, sniping roles, conducting raids on enemy positions and investigating new enemy weapons and tactics. Suffice to say that a unit's intelligence section had a very dangerous role in the field, with a high chance of wounding or death. This can have only served to make the National Serviceman's feelings all the worse, having just arrived in Korea from a relatively safe profession, only to be immediately placed in such a dangerous position by Winspear. As a result, the National Serviceman began wetting the bed from that day onward. This was a typical bodily manifestation of fear as had occurred throughout previous conflicts. Newlands had noted that primary symptoms of severe fear in soldiers typically included instances of uncontrollable sweating, shaking and involuntary release of bodily fluids, just as happened here.⁴² The fact that such a severe episode of fear overcame the National serviceman as soon as he arrived on the frontlines clearly demonstrates that men

⁴¹ Sgt. L. Winspear, (IWM 21593), Reel 3.

⁴² E. Newlands, P. 156.

were keenly aware of the dangers posed by combat in Korea from the moment they were deployed. It seems clear that fear in combat was a universal part of frontline life in Korea. However, reactions to combat fears were not always as compromising as bedwetting or crippling anxiety. Some soldiers reacted to fear by doubling down on their combat roles and focusing on the mission at hand, in a manner similar to that observed during the Second World War.⁴³ In these instances, some individuals were seemingly able to shrug off the effects of their proximity to the wounded and manage the dangers that had befallen them with a cool calmness. This was especially well observed behaviour in soldiers in leadership roles, particularly in officers and more junior non-commissioned officers. Undoubtedly, this was due in part to the expectation that leaders in a combat environment had to set an example, however it is still an interesting angle on reactions to fear. Lieutenant Millar, a soldier with the Royal Australian regiment, at the Battle of Kapyong in 1951, recalled watching a British officer's deliberate and controlled reaction to danger whilst surrounded and under fire:

Colonel Ferguson seemed very calm and acted like he was in total control of the situation. He showed a great concern for our wounded whilst encircled, with no apparent regard for his own safety. It was as if he was just in a practice drill.⁴⁴

Here we can see an example of how leaders in combat were expected to completely invert their reaction to fear and approach the situation with an exemplary calmness. Millar describes how despite being in a desperate combat situation, encircled by the enemy and under fire, Colonel Ferguson took deliberate steps to show a lack of fear. By acting as if it was no more dangerous than a practice drill, Ferguson was able to project an image of calmness despite the ongoing combat around him. In other instances, soldiers became completely numb

⁴³ E. Newlands, PP. 169- 70.

⁴⁴ Lt. Millar on the battle of Imjin, in B. Breen, *The Battle of Kapyong: 3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, Korea 23- 24 April 1951*, (1992), P.83.

to fear once combat had started, regardless of their feelings beforehand. Sergeant Fredrick Thompson, also recalled an absence of fear in combat during the same night of fighting in which he had fired the Bren gun:

It was quite nerve racking but I think the thing that came across more than anything, was the negative feeling that it didn't matter what you did, as long as you did something. The realisation that you were in the position that you were just didn't seem to matter. I don't recall any feeling of fear, just a need to act in some way.⁴⁵

For Thompson, his reaction to combat was not manifested in fear in a traditional sense but rather in a type of almost fatalistic anxiety which spurred him into action. He describes the need to simply do something as opposed to nothing, regardless of what it was, as more nerve racking than any actual tangible fear. Rather than resulting in hindering symptoms, Thompson experienced fear as a useful motivator. He was more nervous of not acting and failing, rather than being wounded by action. This too is a phenomenon which had been observed in soldiers from the Second World War. Newlands noted that whilst a soldier's experience of fear in combat could indeed be paralysing, it could also prove to be a potent source of motivation, something which men could convert into aggression and spur to action, just as Thompson found in 1951.⁴⁶ Often, fear as a reaction to combat experience did not manifest itself until a considerable time afterwards. Veterans of combat could be aware of the fact that they experienced no fear at the time, however they changed their opinions over the passing years. Private Ronnie Taylor was serving with the 1st Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry when he was deployed to Korea. Part of his duties on the frontline was to work with South Korean troops operating an overhead cable pulley system to get ammunition supplies to men fighting from elevated positions:

I was up fixing the flyover and whilst I was balancing on top to fix the bearings, shots started whizzing past. I remember my Sergeant Major

⁴⁵ Sgt. Fredrick Thompson, (IWM 18772), Reel 4.

⁴⁶ E. Newlands, PP. 155- 156; J. Ellis, PP. 99- 106.

shouting that I should be sectioned for what I was doing. Anyway, about then we started to come under shell fire and I remember at first thinking how distant that fire seemed. I just watched and looked down at the view. I saw two lads working on the bottom end, one of our chaps and a Korean and a shell hit them and like that they were both gone. I didn't think anything of what I was doing at the time, but if you ask me now, I'd agree with the Sergeant Major and say yes, I should have been sectioned.⁴⁷

When recalling what he had done, Taylor seemed amazed at his own reaction to the danger he was in. At the time he had just taken working in that phenomenally precarious and extremely dangerous position as a part of his job, despite the protests of his Sergeant Major. He had little reaction to the danger he was in at the time even when being fired upon by the enemy. This was to the extent that he just watched enemy artillery fire landing near his position as if he was a passive observer. It seemed that Taylor recognised the potential of being wounded, but viewed it as something unlikely or impossible, perhaps as something that just happened to other people. It was not until he discussed the shell fire killing two of his comrades, did he concede that what he was doing was very dangerous and jokingly agreed with the Sergeant Major that he was mad for doing what he did. Taylor was not the most extreme case of this however. On other occasions, soldiers took their reaction to danger even further than a blasé attitude. In some cases, reacting to fear with overt demonstrations of bravado could prove to be even more dangerous than inaction. During the closing stage of the Battle of the Hook, fresh troops arriving to the front had to be officially warned in briefings against rushing back into fire to rescue the wounded and fallen.⁴⁸ Clearly, concerns were being shown that men could react to far to fear by trying to show bravery, even to the point of putting themselves in unnecessary danger. These men exhibited behaviours and tendencies that deliberately exaggerated the

⁴⁷ Pte. Ronnie Taylor, A Company, 1st Battalion, Durham Light Infantry, (Interview with Drew Ryder, Sedgefield, 23/3/2018).

⁴⁸ Sgt. L. Winspear, (IWM 21593), Reel 3.

dangers posed to them in battle despite these warnings. One component of this group was composed of troops from both volunteer and National Service backgrounds, who developed lackadaisical attitudes towards danger and the threat of wounding. Examples of this ranged in scale. In some instances, soldiers would walk alongside their trenches to make travelling through the lines easier, despite the potential danger posed by enemy fire.⁴⁹ Whilst this was undoubtedly dangerous, it was sometimes a necessity and a calculated risk on the part of the men doing so. In other cases however, a lackadaisical approach to danger was developed in spite of the chance of wounding rather than calculated against it. More surprisingly, this behaviour was just as common in more experienced soldiers as it was in new troops fresh to the front. Sergeant Major George Patterson of the Black Watch reflected upon how he encountered severe problems with the attitude to danger shown by longer serving troops when faced with new reinforcements:

Actually, the volunteers who'd been with us the longest could leave a lot to be desired. They thought of themselves as the would-be all soldier types, despite being nothing of the sort. See, they would try to show off to the younger ones, which is not the sort of thing you want in positions of life and death. You suddenly had to continually be chasing them up 'Wear your steel helmet, wear your flak jacket' that sort of thing. They could be so unimaginative in that way. They didn't think anything about it until someone was sniped, then they all think, 'oh that could have been me' and suddenly it's all 'best do what the Sergeant Major says'. The worst we had, was one of our highlanders, thought he was invincible just like all the other young lads. Anyway, he was killed by shrapnel because he didn't have his gear on.⁵⁰

Here, Patterson recalled how some of his more experienced career soldiers began to show off a lackadaisical attitude to danger in front of new recruits. With the arrival of troops who could be viewed beneath them, some of Patterson's men

⁴⁹ Sgt. Fredrick Thompson, (IWM 18772), Reel 4.

⁵⁰ Sgt Maj. George Patterson, A Coy, 1st Battalion, Black watch, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 7/7/1999, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 19094), Reel 1.

adopted an almost fatalistic, devil may care approach to danger, projecting the attitude that they were invincible. Possibly, this could even be driven by an attempt to project a masculine bravado and toughness in the face of untested soldiers. By discarding lifesaving equipment like helmets and flak jackets, these men were pushing the idea that they are tough enough not to need such protection. To an extent, they were using the fear and danger as leverage to display their own masculinity and assert a confidence or even a superiority over new troops. Patterson himself attributed this to an arrogance of youth, almost as a rebellion against army authority in the face of new arrivals. This seems even more likely when we consider that despite Patterson's repeated warnings of the dangers and 'chasing up' of slacking men, some troops continued to do so. Patterson went on to describe how it was difficult to get men to face danger with a more serious attitude. 'You had to do it in a particular way, not just shouting at them but telling them for their own sake to wear your tin hat'.⁵¹ The fact that 'shouting' at soldiers to improve their attitude to danger was apparently ineffective would further suggest that their reaction was partially motivated by a rebellion against authority. As Patterson stated men would improve and listen to him once the danger was made apparent and it was clearly in their own best interests to comply, but not when directed by naked authority. In a sense, soldiers rebelliously employing a blasé reaction to combat to spite army authority could be considered an expression of bodily control in the in the army's frontline regime. By exposing their body to danger unnecessarily, soldiers were exercising a subtle rebellion against the army's control of their person. Edward Bulley from the King's Shropshire regiment, spoke to the Imperial War Museum of how in 1951 before being made an NCO, he

⁵¹ Ibid.

and his comrades would continually place their bodies in places of mild danger precisely because they were told not to:

We used to get in a lot of bother for not wearing our tin hats or for walking along the parapet of the trench rather than in the trenches and such. It was dangerous, we knew and there were miles of trenches, it was just like the 14- 18 war, but we were just typical English people not doing as we was told in circumstances like that. So, we used to just keep walking around the top of it. We would even go sunbathing on the parapet in the summer without any problems.⁵²

We can see from Bulley's testimony that he and the other soldiers in his unit were deliberately exposing their bodies to known danger purely because they were being told not to. Soldiers walking along the top of trenches and ditching helmets, were not only practical concessions to comfort, but were used as ways of exerting control over one's own body. This was not just a relaxed attitude to bodily danger, but a leveraging of danger into rebellion. The clearest case of this was sunbathing on the trench parapet, exposing themselves to what they were told was dangerous not only without protective gear, but shirtless and bare skinned. As Bulley states, he and his fellows were well aware of the danger posed by their activities, however he attributes his actions squarely to being contrary to authority, more so than to make life easier. By deliberately and rebelliously placing the body in harm's way on the frontline, these men's reactions to danger represent a similar but less extreme form of bodily control than one observed by Newlands during the Second World War. Soldiers rebelling against army control and authority over their body could resort to physically damaging themselves, in some cases with minor superficial damage, such as deliberately cutting oneself whilst shaving, to serious cases of self-harm, wounding and even suicide.⁵³ It seems from what Patterson

⁵² Sgt. Edward Bulley, 1st Battalion, King's Shropshire Light Infantry, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 3/4/1999, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 18749), Reel 2.

⁵³ E. Newlands, P. 74; Pte. Frank Offiler, 6th Battalion, Northamptonshire and Derbyshire Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 1999, Peter Hart, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 16352), Reel 4.

and Bulley described, men in Korea were expressing a similar rebellion on the frontlines. Sergeant Patterson himself represented a soldier who had been through the Second World War and who had learned to value the protection to his body offered by personal armour and the iconic steel 'tin hat' brodie helmet. In many ways therefore, his experience of fear in combat was quite the opposite of the soldiers who were slacking in the face of danger. Conversely, Bulley represented those who were able to leverage danger into a form of rebellion. By actively placing themselves in forbidden danger, these men were finding the only ways they could to defy army restrictions over their person.

Non-Combat Troops in Battle

Thus far this chapter has examined combat through the testimony of men who were present on the frontlines of the conflict. However, not every British soldier deployed to the Korean War experienced combat through the sights of a rifle or from behind a machine gun. Many soldiers were involved in fighting through much less direct means of battle. Artillerymen, support troops and all manner of administrative personnel were each key components of the British Army's fighting force in Korea and although they were not all necessarily on the cutting edge of the battlefield, they had their own thoughts and experiences of combat. These men all reacted to the experiences of combat in their own individual way. Although this has been observed in oral histories from other conflicts and is not a unique phenomenon to Korea, the testimony of these non-frontline troops is still highly valuable as a representation of these groups. Their view of the enemy could be very different, both figuratively and literally, than the view of troops who had to face hostile forces in direct infantry combat. Their reaction to facing fear in combat could be different from that of men trained and prepared for it. How they reacted to fear was also complicated. Bourke observed in various other conflicts of the

Twentieth Century that many soldiers who had roles away from the frontlines were equally as likely to develop intense reactions to the experience of combat as frontline infantry.⁵⁴ There were occasions during the Korean conflict in which soldiers who did not normally serve on the frontline were placed in positions where it was highly likely that they would have to engage directly in combat. In these cases, some personnel from non-combat roles developed an intense desire to enter into combat and even took steps to transfer to frontline roles afterwards. Winspear recounted such a case during desperate fighting at the Battle of the Hook, in which a gap in allied frontline required clerks from a battalion headquarters to be rushed forward with the infantry:

We grabbed every able body we could from headquarters to plug the gap in the lines, they even ordered the orderly room clerks up with us, despite their reservations. The Chinese could have walked through in broad daylight if they'd clocked the situation. I was very worried about taking casualties and I remember advancing through the mortar fire and looking left and right and just seeing explosions, all around us. The two orderlies who were with us had the widest grins and were thoroughly enjoyed the outing. After the whole affair one of them asked to be transferred to the rifle company, where he quickly became a section leader and corporal, but he never came home from Korea. He was killed shortly afterwards at another part of the Hook, covering his patrol's retreat.⁵⁵

Winspear described how, despite the Clerks' initial reservations about being sent into battle, they ultimately enjoyed the experience and one even transferred into the rifle company to return to battle. It seems that the clerks went from being hesitant and fearful of entering combat, to finding it to be an adventure. The circumstances they were fighting in were enough to make Winspear, a veteran combat leader, nervous of taking casualties and losing men, yet the clerks still seemed to enjoy it. It appears that these men were reviling in the rare opportunity to become combatants. Similar to the manner in which Cunningham- Boothe described an enjoyment of combat, except that these men were experiencing up

⁵⁴ J. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, PP. 236- 240.

⁵⁵ Sgt. L. Winspear, (IWM 21593), Reel 3.

close something which they had only been involved with indirectly from a distance beforehand. Surprisingly, this is something not uncommonly observed in previous new military histories. Bourke noted how soldiers from civilian and non-combatant roles often developed intense emotional desires to fight and kill, sometimes to an even greater extent than regular troops.⁵⁶ It seems this is clearly the case here, especially as one man volunteered to be placed back into combat soon after. The latter clerk who became a rifleman would eventually go on to be a section leader in combat and ultimately die in an act of conspicuous bravery. From the manner in which Winspear describes it, it appears that it was because of the taste for danger and fighting he developed as a reaction to being suddenly pushed to the frontlines.

It was not just encounters with direct combat which could stir such powerful reactions. To face wounding and death on the frontlines was a particularly deep and impactful experience, regardless of the conflict in which it was encountered. These encounters with broken bodies were always emotionally difficult.⁵⁷ The ways in which troops from behind the frontlines reacted when presented with wounding and death was also more complicated. Under normal circumstances, these men operated with a layer of perceived safety between themselves and the nearest enemy troops. This was particularly the case for gunners and artillerymen. In instances where this perceived safety proved to be an illusion, these men could experience intense emotional reactions. John Davison, being a gunner with the Royal Artillery, only engaged in combat indirectly and as a result he was never confronted by death or wounding until he was injured in a vehicle crash:

By this point in the war it was all pretty steady, we were behind our lines, the enemy were behind theirs. The lads in the infantry up on the front made sure none of them ever got through like, so it was all right for us. We felt we were safe back on the guns and we just used to fire over the top. I realised how bad it really were when I were in the triage, because suddenly you

⁵⁶ J. Bourke, P. xix & PP. 148- 150.

⁵⁷ Newlands, P. 167.

were seeing what was happening to them infantry from the front. We never really saw anything like that but those boys got it bad like... Not all of them made it. It was horrible to see, made you realise how rough the whole thing could be like, you started to worry about yourself a lot more.⁵⁸

The visit to the hospital away from the fighting blurred the lines of safety for

Davison was presented with the reality of wounding and combat in a manner from which he was normally far removed. He describes how experiencing the sight of the wounded infantry was one of the few sour memories he brought back from Korea and how it made him realise how bad the frontline could be. By the winter of 1952 when Davison was injured, the frontlines of the war had become much more static than the rapid movements that had occurred earlier in the war. For the troops of Davison's battery, there were very few instances by this point where they would be directly confronted by the threat of enemy infantry or being wounded in combat. Davison believed that his separation from the frontlines provided him with a degree of safety and to an extent this was true. However, it also meant that he was not faced with the dangers and potential of wounding and death and he reflected that it was rare to see injuries in his role. This was his view until he arrived in a field hospital and was confronted by it directly. The extent of his separation from the frontline is made all the clearer in that he received his wounds in a car crash rather than as a result of enemy action or fire. Chris Shilling highlighted how during the Second World War, encounters with wounding and death could prove to be particularly moving for soldiers who personally bore witness to dying men.⁵⁹ This was even true in cases where soldiers were usually separated from wounding and death. When actually faced with the morbid results of frontline combat and the realisation of how brutal wounding could be, Davison's view of his own safety and of the whole war changed. By seeing how bad the

⁵⁸ Gnr. John Davison, 14th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (Interview with Drew James Ryder University Hospital of North Tees, 7/10/2017).

⁵⁹ Chris Shilling, *The Body and Social Theory*, (London, 2001), P. 184

infantry on the frontline were being injured and the mortality rate that came with it, Davison developed a sympathy for these combat troops, reflected in his view of how horrible it was, as well as a new worry about his own personal safety. Ronald Larby was another serviceman who was presented with wounding and mortality in a role behind the frontlines. Speaking with the Imperial War Museum, he told of how during his duties as signaller and radio operator with the 14th Signal Troop, he witnessed the effect of Chinese artillery fire on a group of Australian soldiers:

It wasn't as bad as we first thought when we finally got to them, so only one of these three fellows had to stay behind in the end. Two men had to be treated for shock, but didn't want to be relieved but their radio operator had been very badly wounded, we had to help him to be evacuated. What had happened was a shell had burst next to the bunker and a shard of steel had gone right through the sandbag wall and hit him in the back while he was sitting at his set... His name was Scott. I wish I knew what happened to him afterwards.⁶⁰

Larby's account of the experience is relatable to many of the reactions to wounding and death Newlands recorded of the Second World War, particularly in the examination of the effect of seeing the wounded and dead on soldiers.⁶¹ Just as these soldiers became fixated on the details of the damage to the human body, Larby was able to recall in precise detail exactly how the Australian radio operator had been wounded, as well as recalling the man's first name and considering his fate. However, unlike the accounts used by Newlands and Shilling, Larby was in the particular position of being removed from the direct front line in this instance. Additionally, Larby was also acting in the same role as the wounded man. Doubtless, it weighed on him that Scott had been injured whilst doing the same job as Larby, in what must have seemed like a safe position, inside a sandbag emplacement and clearly, Larby was deeply affected by the sight of a particularly bad shrapnel wounding. Although he stated that he did not know the man's

⁶⁰ Pte. Ronald Larby, (IWM 18199), Reel 3.

⁶¹ E. Newlands, PP. 167- 168; C. Shilling, P. 184.

ultimate fate, he alluded to the fact that he 'had to stay behind in the end'.

Possibly, Larby was shielding himself from the very real possibility that he could have been in the same position and was assuring himself that he did not personally see the man's death, leaving his fate uncertain. There are several things we can learn from these accounts. Firstly, was that men in positions behind the direct frontline fighting Korea were just as likely to develop emotional reactions to combat, wounding and death, as their counterparts who fought in an infantry role. Like the frontline troops, Davison and Larby were deeply affected by their encounters with wounding and death and it profoundly affected their experiences. Secondly, given the manner in which these men's cases reflect what Newlands and Shilling found in the Second World War, it suggests that investigation of the experiences of troops behind the frontline in Korea can indeed yield important insight into the experience of Twentieth Century combat more generally.

Conclusion

It is impossible to fully appreciate the context of a veteran's testimony of a conflict without acknowledging the importance of the experience of combat. Fighting and killing in Korea was one of the ways in which the British soldier's experience was the most similar to their counterparts in other Twentieth Century conflicts and yet through subtle but important differences, we can enhance our understanding of combat experience in a wider sense. A soldier's experience does not remain static and isolated in perfect memory from the conflict's end through to its recollection and much can shape the manner in which troops viewed their experience in the meantime. In particular cultural narratives and expectations can limit how veterans feel they are allowed to feel about their memories. For this reason, it can be difficult for veterans to recount their true experiences as they actually felt about such things as killing and fear. As Korea lacked an established cultural narrative in

the same sense as better known conflicts, soldiers were able to more freely express their feelings on these matters. As has been made clear, British soldiers in Korea were able to view their enemy in terms which allowed them to recall killing with greater ease. Various accounts show that either through racial and imperialist biases such as those exhibited by Larby, as a political designation, as Winspear described or as a variety of other reasons, soldiers were able to separate their overall view of the enemy from that of individual people. This effect was exaggerated when combat situations reduced the individualism of the enemy. When the act of killing was performed over long range, at night time, or against such large enemy numbers that an individual was impossible to identify, British soldiers were less likely to incorporate emotion into their experience, over feelings of professionalism.⁶² Killing in these circumstances was impersonal and easily recallable by soldiers. This was more difficult for veterans who had fought the enemy at close quarters. When the enemy soldier was fought on terms where it was impossible to conceal their individuality, men such as Robert Searle had to recount their actions with much more intense emotion and regret.⁶³ However, this was not universally the case. Echoing darker elements of combat experience from other conflicts, some soldiers found a thrill and joy in their recollections of killing and battle. Just like cases throughout the Twentieth Century, veterans of Korea such as Ashley Cunningham- Boothe admitted that they felt a terrific thrill to kill the enemy, regardless of whether they could perceive them as individuals or not. Reactions to death and fear were also a primary factor in the experience of combat and again, they are common factors to many conflicts. It has been covered extensively in conflicts outside of Korea and there are similarities in how British

⁶² Pte. J. Grosvenor, (IWM 15337), Reel 1; Sgt Maj F. Thompson, (IWM 18772), Reel 4; Sgt. L. Winspear, (IWM 21593), Reel 3.

⁶³ Pte. R. Searle, (IWM 18470), Reel 2

soldiers reacted. Fear was a soldier's constant companion, as Ellis and Newlands noted in the Second World War.⁶⁴ As in the previous conflicts, soldiers in Korea exhibited many reactions to fear, some expected and others more surprising. Some men had immediate uncontrollable bodily reactions to the prospect of facing combat, including loss of bladder function, whereas others found it took years for fear of death to influence their memories of the experience, such as Ronnie Taylor, who was only able to articulate this after years of reflection.⁶⁵ Some troops, primarily those in a leadership position forced themselves to react to the fear of death and wounding by focusing on their mission.⁶⁶ These men faced fear with overt casualness in order to inspire their comrades. There was also a great deal of Soldiers who reacted to the experience of combat in ways that would have only been possible in the situation presented by the Korean War. Blasé reactions to danger, deliberate dangerous heroics and even an ambivalence towards personal armour became common in Korea. Volunteer soldiers were prone to acts of showing off in combat to exhibit their superiority to national servicemen.⁶⁷ Whereas, National Servicemen and even some experienced soldiers would often have to be hounded in order to keep even the most basic aspects of safety in battle, with many cases of shirking helmets and armour in favour of comfort and even in the extremes, men abandoning the cover of their trenches.⁶⁸ Furthermore, it was not only frontline combat troops who experienced these complex reactions to combat, killing and death. Troops who rarely found themselves on the frontlines could be captivated by their brushes with combat, men such as the clerks described by Winspear enjoyed entering into combat and sought to return to

⁶⁴ J. Ellis, PP. 102- 103; E. Newlands, PP. 169- 70.

⁶⁵ Pte. Ronnie Taylor, (Interview with Drew Ryder).

⁶⁶ Pte. R. Larby, (IWM 18199) Reel 3, E. Newlands, P. 169.

⁶⁷ Sgt. Maj. G. Patterson, (IWM 19094) Reel 1.

⁶⁸ Ibid; E. Bulley, (IWM 18749) Reel 2.

danger as riflemen.⁶⁹ Others, such as Davidson, found their brief encounter with the consequences of frontline combat changed his attitude in entirely the opposite direction. Instead of seeking out danger, Davidson's reaction to seeing wounding and death up close convinced him to be more worried about the threat it presented and to be more careful of himself in future.⁷⁰ Reactions to wounding and death such as this could be just as strong in non-combat troops as in frontline forces. Larby for example, was deeply affected by the sight of a wounded radio operator behind the lines in a similar role as he.⁷¹ All of these men's experiences are important for two reasons. Firstly, taken in their totality, the collective oral testimonies of these men's experience demonstrate that the combat experience in Korea is largely reflective of the experience of Twentieth Century combat more generally, albeit with Korea's own unique subtleties. What this means is that study of the largely untapped testimonies and collective memories of veterans of Korea can provide as yet unseen insight into the soldier's experience of Twentieth Century warfare more generally. Secondly, they are important because the experience of combat was important to the soldiers themselves. Going into battle, whether as an infantryman or otherwise was a major element in their experience of the Korean War generally and as a part of their wider life experience. To engage in acts of war was the primary reason these men were trained, prepared and deployed to Korea in the first place. Therefore, understanding how they reacted to combat is of capital importance to framing the context of the wider human experience for British soldiers in the Korean War.

⁶⁹ Sgt. L. Winspear, (IWM 21593), Reel 3.

⁷⁰ Gnr. John Davison, 14th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (Interview with Drew James Ryder University Hospital of North Tees, 7/10/2017).

⁷¹ Pte. Ronald Larby, (IWM 18199), Reel 3.

The Social Lives of Soldiers

Having been through a shared experience of training, deployment to Korea, adapting to the environment of the frontlines and surviving combat operations, soldiers in Korea often found that turning to one and other as human beings was their primary and most effective coping mechanism to the strains of life. In old military histories, the social lives of soldiers were mostly considered secondary to their role on the battlefield or their position on the campaign map, if indeed they were considered at all. However, soldiers are not machines, they are human and as such have complex needs and requirements beyond basic nourishment. To this end, one of the key features of the discourse in new military history was the recognition of the role social interactions and inter personal relationships played in the experience of soldiers. It is now widely considered that social interactions and group identities of soldiers are as relevant to their experience as any other element of army life. Although investigations into soldiers' social bonds have for the most part focused on the First and Second World Wars, social interaction was just as important for soldiers in Korea as it was in any other conflict. Eric Leed and John Ellis brought these factors into the spotlight with some of the earlier writings in the body of new military history in the 1970s and 1980s. In terms of the social aspect of a soldier's experience, Leed highlighted that war was an experience discontinuous from the social normalities of civilian life, yet still a highly communal affair within the ranks. Lives of soldiers on the front were extremely different from their civilian lives yet familiar social normalities were still important for all soldiers. Since Leed recentred these elements, no work on the individual soldier's experience of war has been complete without examination of how social

relationships affected their lives. Alongside Leed and Ellis, Joanna Bourke, Michael Roper, Emma Newlands and countless others have all examined and advanced the study of emotional wellbeing and social interactions in the experience of the serving soldier. Between them, they clearly demonstrate that the close emotional and social interactions as a wider aspect of group identity were an integral and vital part of soldiers' lives in conflicts throughout the Twentieth Century.¹ Just as the examining the recollections of combat experience from Korea veterans demonstrated that their stories are of tremendous value to further exploration of modern combat more generally, so to does the wealth of oral testimonies regarding their social experience of Korea reveal new insights into the wider military experience in the mid- Twentieth Century. The constant human need for social interactions is one of the prime examples of continuity between the experience of soldiers in the Korean conflict and those surrounding it throughout the Twentieth Century. The human requirement to maintain social interaction is especially important under the arduous and stressful conditions of war that proved to be invaluable to help soldiers cope with their circumstances. In absence of family and close friends from home, British soldiers in Korea had little choice but to turn to each other for friendship and social bonding. Of course, no two individuals share the exact same social needs and experiences, yet all soldiers in Korea sought social interaction in one form or another from a variety of sources, even if they were affected in a number of different ways. Many soldiers developed these social bonds with their fellow soldiers as coping mechanisms for the emotional strain of deployment. This was a process which had been encouraged openly by

¹ E. Leed, *No man's land: Combat and Identity in World War 1*, (Cambridge, 1979); J. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male, Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, (London, 1996), PP. 124- 170; M. Roper, *The Secret Battle, Emotional Survival in the Great War*, (Manchester, 2009); E. Newlands, *Civilians into Soldiers, War, the Body and British Army Recruits, 1939- 45*, (Manchester, 2014).

the British Army from their earliest days of these men's training. Emma Newlands demonstrated how thoroughly this bonding was encouraged in army life through the paradigm of bodily studies. The key element of Newlands' work for the study of social structure is the extensive explanation of army training processes in the Second World War, which remained virtually unchanged by the time of the Korean War. It reveals how, the army had a well-developed process, designed primarily to foster specific social structures and group identities between groups of soldiers.² This co- dependence often developed into closely knit and emotionally strong friendship groups. One of the most significant examples of this behaviour was the close social and emotional care soldiers shared with each other. This could extend as far as men adopting traditionally parental and maternal roles in caring for one and other. This was first highlighted in soldiers in the frontline trenches of the First World War and was termed 'mothering' behaviour Bourke and Michael Roper.³ It is not difficult to find examples of this behaviour throughout oral histories and life writing throughout the Twentieth Century, with troops fussing over each other's kit as might a mother insist upon their child wearing a scarf. However, as important as these bonds could be, they were not always as permeant as they appeared. Such bonds of friendship were important, but they could also be temporary and had the potential to evaporate quickly following the war's end. More still looked to home for direct communication with family, friends and loved ones via a complex and efficient postal system. One of the main concepts which has permeated narratives of Korea as 'the forgotten war' was that it was a remote, isolated and far flung conflict. It is hard to imagine that social communication across the globe to a warzone could occur at any meaningful rate in this line of thinking, however, this is precisely what occurred in many cases. Following from experience gathered over

² E. Newlands, PP. 63- 68.

³ J. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, PP. 133- 135; M. Roper, PP. 159- 203.

the previous century of engaging in large scale conflicts, the British Army went to great lengths to ensure this line of social communication stayed open to soldiers on the front. From the manner of surviving together on the frontline, daily necessities to learned behavioural traits and communal consumption of items such as alcoholic and caffeinated beverages, many factors contributed towards group identities and social bonds as coping mechanisms in daily life.

Personal and Group Friendship

One of the most obvious elements of social support in Korea which crops up in veterans' testimony is the importance of friendship, on both a personal level and as a group. Friendship was one of the first and strongest ways in which soldiers learned to care for one and other and although this was not necessarily at a maternal or parental level it was none the less important. In the words of Private Peter Farrar, 'One's daily world was that of your company, your dugout and mostly your mates'.⁴ Soldiers in Korea naturally formed very tightly knit friendships with groups and individuals from their units, but the support and emotional care these relationships provided were essential coping tools for life on the frontline. Support from these groups came in the form of individual acts of care taken proactively between friends as well as passive support from the group as a whole. Groups of friends shared living spaces, food, luxuries and sought each other out whenever possible. Ronnie Taylor reflected on how important his immediate group of close friends in Korea were to his general experience of the war:

I had some good mates over there, we were really close. Well it was just natural that you made friends, it happens in any walk of life, but it was closer over there, you know. A bit like school mates. We always stuck together when we could, sometimes we would all be off on different duties but otherwise we were joined at the hip so you could say. We were always there to have a laugh with and just to keep each other company I suppose. I

⁴ Pte. Peter Farrar, 1st Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 21/05/1985, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 8850), Reel 3.

didn't really get to know them until we were on the ship over, but once we were there that was it, the four of us thick as thieves. Well you couldn't have made it through without having people there for you. I suppose we were supporting each other in a way like that, we always tried to cheer each other up and such, made sure you weren't on your own. We'd always share a brew with each other and stuff like that. I still keep in touch with William because he lives not too far away and I used to see the others at the reunions, but not so much these last few years.⁵

Ronnie's recollection of his friend group revealed just a few of the ways in which close groups of friends could support one and other. He described his army friends as closer to him would have occurred in other circumstances, being almost like school friends than colleagues. This was to the extent that they actively sought each other out whenever possible and were practically 'joined at the hip' when not on other duties. Although it may seem like a perfectly ordinary thing for troops to form cliques and friend groups, the importance of them in supporting each other is clear in Ronnie's statement, particularly in his belief that one couldn't have made it through Korea without friends. He openly described the ways in which his mates interacted as supporting each other. The manner in which they sought to keep each other company, made sure 'a brew' was ready and helped to keep their spirits up was vital to maintaining morale and keeping each other going. Despite this, Taylor did not appear to feel that the emotional support he and his friends provided each other was quite at a parental level and from what he describes it appeared more fraternal for the most part. James Grundy was another soldier who recalled the importance of staying together in a friend group. He described how he and his close mates shared each other's personal close space at all times: 'There would be five of us in the tent, the team, we slept together, we went to the NAAFI together, we worked together, you kept together as a team'.⁶ Grundy, like Taylor,

⁵ Pte. Ronnie Taylor, A Company, 1st Battalion, Durham Light Infantry, (Interview with Drew Ryder, Sedgfield, 23/3/2018).

⁶ James Grundy, in S. Kelly, *British Soldiers of the Korean War, in Their Own Words*, (Briscombe, 2013), P.21.

expressed the importance of sticking together with friends and how they worked together to get through the experiences they found themselves in. They would share a sleeping space, eat together and worked with one and other whenever they could. This further reflects the importance of physical comfort shared between soldiers. The ways in which Grundy and Taylor would share space with their comrades, eating, sleeping and working in close contact with one and other, mirrors how soldiers in other conflicts would behave in order to find domestic emotional support. Bourke listed examples of how this close domesticity was a major emotional support to soldiers in the trenches of the First World War. Soldiers in their dugouts on the Western Front would spoon together in their sleep for warmth and comfort, would share meals together and read books together and generally looked to each other for close company.⁷ In her analysis of this, Bourke concluded that this was indeed a major form of support for those involved, both as a domestic comfort and as a form of physical intimacy in an environment lacking female tenderness. That being said, this analysis may be slightly overly gendered to fully extend to Korea, as the examples from the latter conflict do not make reference to it being a replacement for female compassion. Rather as Taylor states, it was simply very close friendship in what would otherwise be a lonely environment. Similarly, Newlands described such behaviour as being more brotherly in these cases than anything else.⁸ At any rate however, what can be drawn from all this observation is that brotherly or otherwise, there was a tremendous importance that friendships played in a soldier's experience on the frontline.

⁷ J. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, PP. 135- 136.

⁸ E. Newlands, P. 77; Pte. Dick Fiddament, 2nd Battalion, Royal Norfolk Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 1997, Peter Hart, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 17354), Reel 4.

Naturally, these relations within group friendship were composed of several interlinking individual friendships. These individual friendships were the working mechanics behind group friendships and were equally as significant to soldier's experience. Bill Hiscox had been the only man from his regiment dispatched to Korea to help fulfil the urgent need for radio operators. He told the Imperial War Museum of how important to his experience a single particular friend could be:

I was the only man from my unit sent out to Korea, so when I was in the docks, I didn't know anyone. There was a great big fat bloke under my bunk on the troop ship, smashing bloke, but he was so fat that he couldn't wear a standard issue army belt, so they gave him two with a buckle at the back. That was how I first met Jock, he laughed and said, 'Bloody hell, they're sending kids to die now?' because I never looked my age. Anyway, he said 'If you want to go out when we dock tonight, I'll look after your kit for you, 'cos I'll not bother going anywhere'. See even on the boat you couldn't leave you kit about because someone would nick it. And that was one of the first of the friends I made in Korea. I was with him the whole time I was deployed over there and on the way back actually.⁹

Having been the only man departing to Korea from his home regiment, Hiscox was denied the chance to travel with a friend group he had already developed.

However, he instead substituted this by finding a strong companionship in another soldier on the ship across. This case of individual friendship was clearly very important to Hiscox. He was able to remember in very clear detail about how he first met his friend Jock, as well as the interaction which sparked their friendship and how they remained close friends throughout the conflict. They were clearly good friends, being able to joke about each other's physical appearance in such good humour, with Hiscox mocking Jock's weight and conversely the older man mocking Hiscox's youthful appearance. This also highlights another important point about individual friendships on deployment, it was not necessary for the participants in a personal friendship to be from similar backgrounds. Hiscox

⁹ Dvr. William Hiscox, 170th Independent Mortar Battery & 120th Light Anti-Air Battery, Royal Artillery, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 29/04/2006, Toby Brooks, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 28764), Reel 1.

represented an outsider, an artilleryman and radio operator with no social contacts in the infantry regiment that he was shipping out with. He became close friends with Jock despite the notable age difference between the two of them and evident difference in military experience. In spite of all this, the two had become close originating from a small act of kindness when Jock sacrificed his own leisure time to look after the new soldier's kit, which was liable to be stolen if not guarded. This enabled Hiscox to have one last night in England before departing, at the expense of Jock not being able to. This act of looking out for one and other, even at the carer's expense, was a significant step in soldiers' social bonding and it was clearly meaningful to Hiscox. Again, like in larger social groups Hiscox and Jock spent a great deal of time close together once in Korea. This further demonstrates how significant having the support of even one close friend could be for soldiers on the frontlines. A major part of the support value offered by friendship groups was simply the removal of loneliness. Although soldiers were always surrounded by people from their unit, feelings of deep loneliness could occur if a soldier was not able to integrate into a group of friends. James Lucock described how he found life to be much more difficult after he was separated from the friends he had made in his battalion as they were sent into different new companies on the frontline. He struggled to make friends and make the same bonds he had, resulting in a feeling of overwhelming loneliness:

They split us up into different companies. So, they put me in Charlie Company. It was so quiet there, you never heard birds. I was taken to a dugout on my own, given some wire and told to make a bed. It was a bit daunting being on my own like that, I've never felt so alone in my life all by myself. That was my welcome to the King's Regiment, I was just left on my own. After that experience I made sure that anyone new who came was not left on their own, because I was alone for ever and a day, the whole time I was there and even when I became a Lance Corporal then a Corporal, I was always alone.¹⁰

¹⁰ James Lucock, in S. Kelly, PP 103- 104.

Lucock's account of his experience demonstrates just how damaging social isolation and a lack of a friend group could be for a soldier on the front line and therefore just how important a healthy social life was to men in those circumstances. As social comradery was one of the key coping mechanisms for personal stress and difficulties on the frontline, feelings of social isolation and loneliness could render a soldier even more vulnerable to breakdown. During the early stages of the emergence of new military history and the refocusing on soldier's individual experiences, Eric Leed analysed the phenomenon of social isolation amongst soldiers. He found that any number of reasons could contribute to social isolation in soldiers, from social status and levels of education, to whether an individual was a volunteer as opposed to a conscript or as in Lucock's case, had simply transferred into a unit with already established social groups.¹¹ Prolonged social isolation on the frontline could lead to a rapid deterioration in a soldier's mental wellbeing inducing feelings of intense misery and resentment to their comrades. Lucock exhibits elements of this in his description of the frontlines. In the midst of discussing his loneliness, he specifically references the cold, the lack of birdsong and other negative descriptors indicating how harshly his loneliness impacted his world view in this time on the front. Being alone was not just a social difficulty in its own right, but it also made general life on the frontlines harder and difficult for Lucock. Leed's examples from German soldiers in the First World War further demonstrated that this could occur and continue to exist even in groups who had been through combat together and was in contrast to the generally held view that fighting alongside one and other made soldiers into proverbial brothers in arms.¹² The example given by Leed ultimately culminated in a soldier's breakdown and physical confrontation with his comrades, showing how

¹¹ E. Leed, PP.86- 88.

¹² Ibid; Franz Schauwecker, *The Fiery Way*, (London, 1921), P. 17.

seriously damaging social isolation could be for troops on the frontline. Lucock also recognised this during his own service and set upon himself to ensure that other new arrivals were never left alone and isolated. This ensured that both new arrivals to the frontline, as well as Lucock himself did not have to face frontline life without the coping mechanisms afforded to them by a social group.

Close Caring

An important aspect of social bonding throughout soldiers' accounts in Korea is a phenomenon of close and almost parental social care. This process has been described throughout the development of new military histories as 'Mothering' and is typified by behaviour in which soldiers learned to look after one and other, 'as a mother might care for her children'.¹³ Though this is partly an extension of the British Army's policy of fostering group co-dependence from training onwards, it can also be seen as a sign of the close social bonds men in Korea developed as coping mechanisms. Private Brian Hough told the Imperial War Museum of how he developed a rash from flea bites and of how his friends and his Sergeant showed a tremendous amount of concern over his personal health in a very parental manner:

I developed a painful rash on my ankles. But how do you report sick with a rash when there's fellas getting their heads blown off and everything? Not to be dramatic if you understand what I mean, but I felt ashamed of myself reporting sick with a rash. Anyway, I was changing my socks one morning and a couple of my mates saw the state of my legs and they went on and on nagging at me to report sick, so eventually I did. I went to Sergeant Blackmore, who was hard as nails but what a smashing fella. He said 'let's look Brian' and when he saw it his language was very choice, he went up in the air, called me stupid this stupid that for not reporting sick before. He had me report straight to an American M.A.S.H for triage.¹⁴

¹³ M. Roper, PP. 122- 123; J. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, PP. 133- 135.

¹⁴ Pte. Brian Hough, 1st Battalion, King's Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, no date given, Fiona King, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 34705), Reel 3.

Hough spoke about how he initially felt ashamed of reporting sick due to the rash he had developed. It seems that he felt obliged to remain quiet about the pain it was causing him because of a perceived social pressure not to complain whilst other men had been seriously wounded and, as he said, 'had their heads blown off'. His self-imposed shame prevented him from reporting himself sick until two of his friends saw the state of his legs. These men then nagged Hough until he went to see his sergeant. This demonstration of deep interpersonal care by his friends reaction to his health shows the care between the social group. The way his friends 'nagged' Hough was almost parental in and of itself, however this social relationship becomes even clearer in Hough's description of Sergeant Blackmore. Hough speaks about Blackmore in proud, almost fatherly terms, complimenting his firmness but also his fairness when calling him 'hard as nails but smashing'. Clearly, Hough had a great deal of admiration for the sergeant. The Sergeant's reaction also reflects an element of parent like care for Hough. This is shown when addressing him by his first name to assess his illness and then becoming angry that Hough had tried to hide his rash before immediately sending him for treatment. The behaviour of Sergeant Blackmore reflects descriptions of the behaviour Michael Roper analysed and termed 'the Subaltern's house wifery'.¹⁵ Non- Commissioned Officers and senior soldiers would actively care for the men under their command in a very motherly or parental fashion, keeping an active awareness of their health and their personal hardships. In these examples we can see how men's care was directly beneficial as a social bond. Mothering behaviours occurred in many ways in Korea, besides kindnesses shown by officers and NCOs. Men often took close care of each other's welfare, from sitting down with each other for with tea, to men ensuring that their mates slept well.¹⁶ Mothering for

¹⁵ M. Roper, PP 130- 137.

¹⁶ John Dutton, *Korea 1950- 53, Recounting REME involvement*, (London, 2004), P.26.

soldiers in the Korean War was much more complex than simple social motivations, yet it could have similar implications within social groups. However, there were other instances where parental caring behaviour could be both self-serving and also support members of the social group. Kenneth Black, a tanker with the 8th Hussars, observed how the tank crews would ensure the driver got the best night's sleep in bad conditions:

We had the 'bivvy' tent, the engine cover and the turret cover, which were like green canvas and we used to make a thick pad of them and put four sleeping bags together. If we had to put up a guard at night, Fletcher, our driver, would go in the middle, so he could keep warm and get a night's sleep because he was driving and he'd be the one to get you out of a sticky situation and the three of us would do an hour each.¹⁷

Black gives an account of how he and his tank crew took to caring for their driver primarily as a survival means for themselves, because, as Black states, he was the one to get them out of trouble. This is not quite the motherly domesticity shown by Bourke of some men in the First World War, where soldiers would tuck each other in and otherwise ensure good sleeping arrangements, however it is quite similar.¹⁸ As much as Black and his crew ensured Fletcher was wrapped up warm in a motherly manner, their primary purpose of their behaviour was not on the surface socially motivated. The primary goal of their care for Fletcher was to ensure he was well rested for driving the tank. In this role, Fletcher was member of the crew who was most needed to 'get out of a sticky situation' and this was recognised by the group. It could therefore be argued that the group's behaviour was not social bonding and mothering, but simply self-preservation. However, considering again the difference between intent and effect, Black's crew was still performing a motherly role, even if they were acting selfishly, they still acted as if

¹⁷ Tpr. Kenneth Black, 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 05/12/1998, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 18022), Reel 3.

¹⁸ J. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, PP. 133- 135.

they were mothering. Additionally, as much as they sought to act in a manner of self-preservation, they were also acting in the interests of the social group. Black and the others were not only protecting themselves, they were also protecting the entire group from danger, in a social manner.

Keeping up Appearances

As has been seen, social interactions were not universally helpful in allowing soldiers to healthily deal with stressful and dangerous situations. One of the points made by Eric Leed in his examination of soldier's self-identity in the First World War was that men in the trenches internalised various conscious self-images as a reaction to the destruction and death surrounding them.¹⁹ Essentially, these men were consciously adopting warped self-views in order to better personify the idea of a soldier to themselves. This was also true of men in Korea, although this was not necessarily a reaction troops had in order to appease their own sense of identity, but rather to demonstrate it to their social group. One part of this which becomes apparent throughout veterans' testimony was a commonly perceived need to project a conscious self-image to those around them and keep up a good appearance in the face of adversity. Be this in terms of maintaining an image of masculinity, individual pride, or one's perception of their national image, many soldiers found that this need to fit an appearance dictated how they displayed their reactions in front of their comrades. This was certainly the case for Robert Searle when he was faced with a life or death situation as one of the few Englishmen serving with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlander's Mortar Platoon. Only a few weeks after witnessing the gruesome effects of his grenades on a North Korean soldier, he was nearly killed by a similar weapon himself. He recounted as one of

¹⁹ E. Leed, PP. 111- 112.

his clearest memories in Korea, how he felt obliged to react with feigned nonchalance:

I've not been able to talk about it for so many years, but I can remember like it was yesterday. I was in a slit trench, only six feet long and just wide enough to get into. I was sat up one end and the lad that was with me was at the other end cleaning grenades. All of a sudden, the boy at the other end gave a shout, dropped a grenade and jumped out the trench. What he'd done is he'd taken the base plate out, left the detonator in and taken the pin out. I couldn't get out, I thought if I try and get over the grenade, I'll cop it, so I just put my head in the corner, screwed myself up as small as I could. There was an explosion. I couldn't believe I was still here. What had happened was the detonator went off, but because the baseplate wasn't on, it blew the detonator out the top and it didn't go off. The whole thing really shook me but I tried not to let it bother me. I always felt that as an Englishman amongst Scots, I had to, I don't know, set an example of sorts so I just more or less carried on.²⁰

From the start, we can see that this event was deeply impactful to Searle's experience in Korea. He specifically mentions that this was not something he felt comfortable discussing for many years after the conflict, despite being able to clearly remember the event and that it was something that really shook him. It must have been particularly daunting for Searle, as he had clear recollections of the effect his own grenade had upon the North Korean soldier at Swarion and reflecting this, he uses visceral language to describe what happened in the following moments. For example, he does not say he just put his head in the corner, rather he 'stuck' it there, similarly, he was not just curling up but 'scrunching' himself as small as he could, both terms more powerful and emotive than plain description. Similarly, he describes the desperation that went through his mind as he sought a way out and the relief that he was still there after the explosion. Evidently, this was a hugely stressful event to befall Searle, both emotionally and physically. Yet, despite the evident emotional stress he faced in the moment and in the years that followed, Searle found that at the time he felt the

²⁰ Pte. Robert Searle, Mortar Platoon, 1st Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 18/7/1998, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 18470), Reel 3.

need to mask his feelings. Rather than displaying the obvious distress caused by facing a live grenade misfiring in a coffin sized trench caused him, Searle instead focused upon hiding how much the event had bothered him as he felt that it was important to represent a particular example of nonchalance in front of his predominantly Scottish cohort. In a similar manner to what Leed found in examples from the First World War, Searle was taking a conscious image of how he believed a soldier or in this case 'an Englishman' should act in the circumstances and projecting that to the group, rather than show how he actually felt. The use of national imagery to hide personal pain was a common theme in writings from the French trenches of Verdun in the First World War.²¹ To an extent, patriotism and Englishness represents something of a moral armour behind which Seale could be privately shaken by his experience, without compromising his own self-image in front of his social group. Not only was Searle putting on a display of what he perceived to be 'Englishness', but he specifically uses the term 'Englishman'. For Searle, this was not just about portraying 'English toughness' but was also intrinsically tied to a projection of masculinity. Projecting a masculine toughness in response to death and near-death experiences was by no means a rare occurrence. John Davidson found that when he returned from field hospital to his unit that he felt he couldn't discuss what the injuries of the wounded men he had seen for fear of compromising his appearance to his mates: 'I didn't really talk about it much with anyone when I was back with my mates. You couldn't really like, they would think you'd gone soft or something.'²² To an extent, the boyish demonstrations of toughness and bravado outlined by Sergeant Major Patterson

²¹ Stéphane Audoin- Rouzeau, 'The French Soldier in the Trenches', in H. Cecil & P. Liddle (eds.), *Facing Armageddon, The First World War Experienced*, (Barnsley, 2016), P. 228.

²² Gnr. John Davison, 14th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (Interview with Drew James Ryder University Hospital of North Tees, 7/10/2017).

as seen in the discussion of behaviour in combat could also be construed as men attempting to project a self- image to their immediate social group.²³

Bonding in Response to Battle

It is clear that the social bonds which soldiers developed between close friend groups were incredibly important as coping mechanisms to the stresses of the frontline, as well as to their general social well- being. However, the question is to what extent were these bonds developed during or as a result of combat and fighting alongside one and other? The idea of 'brothers in arms' is a popular narrative in many portrayals of war and in principle, it is a potent driver of group identity, however the oral testimonies of veterans from Korea seem to suggest that in reality, the relationship between fighting together and forming social bonds was far more nuanced. Joanna Bourke suggested that social bonding over a shared combat experience was a major element of soldiers' experience in conflict, as was submitting to a shared group identity during combat.²⁴ This is also apparent when examining sources from Korea veterans. For example, Cunningham- Boothe, as well as stating how much he enjoyed bonding with his comrades over the experiences of a battle, also described the effect it had on galvanising the relationship between older Second World War Veterans and younger National Servicemen:

Initially we had a problem between the reservists, who were World War Two veterans to a man and the new National Servicemen. Particularly for the junior NCO cadre, these reservists who'd seen action and been through war would look at them and say, 'What can you possibly tell me? You haven't been in the army five minutes, you haven't fought, just because you have that stripe on your shoulder you think you can tell us how to do stuff?'. But eventually, after we'd been through a few scraps, that modified and I think

²³ Sgt Maj. George Patterson, A Coy, 1st Battalion, Black Watch, (Royal Highland Regiment), (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 7/7/1999, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 19094) Reel 1.

²⁴ J. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing, Face to Face with Killing in Twentieth Century Warfare*, (New York, 1999), P. 2

we benefitted from having the reservists, they taught each other things about survival on the front. It was helpful.²⁵

It is clear from Cunningham- Boothe's recollections that general group bonding between different age and experience demographics within his unit was helped by having been through combat together. Combat veterans from the Second World War who had initially been disrespectful of senior officers and NCOs who had not yet been in battle were able to repair the relationship between the two groups. Eventually this even developed into the older and newer soldiers mutually teaching each other techniques to cope with life on the frontlines which helped the unit in the long term. All of this speaks to wider groups and general approaches between soldiers. There are however, some limitations to this approach, as it is less clear to what extent social bonds between individuals were formed as a result of combat. Leed's example of the First World War German infantryman Franz Schauwecker demonstrates that historically, close relationships between individuals and groups were not necessarily formed as an immediate reaction to surviving combat together.²⁶ From what other veterans of Korea have described, it would appear that social bonds between individuals were not so much created afresh, however pre-existing bonds that had formed before combat were reinforced. One of the reasons for this could be due to the fact that in retelling their experiences of battle, the memories of most veterans tend to be focused around their own selves, rather than those around them. In recalling these memories, many veterans can describe their own actions in minute detail, however the way they describe other individuals can seem like they are passive parts of the environment or simply irrelevant details rather than the focus of the event. Fredrick Thompson, for example, who could

²⁵ RSM. Ashley Cunningham- Boothe, 1st Battalion, Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 08/12/1999, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 19913), Reel 4.

²⁶ Eric Leed, *Combat & Identity in World War 1*, (Cambridge, 1979), PP.86- 88; F. Schauwecker, P. 17.

recount the fighting around the Battle of Imjin with remarkable clarity, struggled to remember the identity of the man with whom he shared a slit trench for several hours of ferocious fighting:

Me and another Fusilier, I think he was called Geordie but to be frank I've forgotten his name, got up the hill and arrived amongst our companies who were already dug in, they were under such ferocious attack it was, you know, a question of down on your stomach and crawling forward. We just had to dump the supplies we had brought and crawl over to a Sergeant Major, who sent us to this small slit trench, just room for two of us. Propped up inside was a Bren gun, with a tripod and 27 magazines of ammunition. Suddenly, I found I was glad someone was with me and I said to him 'How is your weapons training? Because here is your chance to learn!'.²⁷

We can clearly see from Thompson's account of the fighting that the other man, who he believes to have been called 'Geordie', was both secondary to Thompson's focus and that he did not develop any meaningful social bond with him as a result of surviving combat together. Although Thompson was very glad to have another soldier with him in the trench, the man himself was unimportant to his memory. Thompson was able to recall many other small details about the fighting, including precisely how many magazines of ammunition were provided with the exact model and set up of weapon, as well as his exact words to Geordie when he joked about the extent of the man's weapons training. However, despite all of this Thompson could only just remember the man's name and even then, he did not seem sure. It would appear that fighting together for such a prolonged period in a slit trench did not stir any kind of social bond between Thompson and Geordie. If there had indeed been a 'brothers in arms' reaction to fighting in these circumstances, one may have expected that Thompson would have developed a closer bond with the man going forward from the battle however, he did not mention 'Geordie' again in his recollection. This suggests that a major part of why

²⁷ Sgt. Fredrick Thompson, Signal Coy, 1st Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 4/8/1999, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 18772) Reel 4.

close social bonds between individuals did not develop directly as a result of combat, is that individuals had a tendency to focus on themselves and their own experience, rather than on others around them. It is also entirely possible that this is a result of how the memories of combat events have been shaped over the years. It is natural to expect that a veteran's memory of fighting is more likely to centre around themselves than relationships with people they may not have seen for many decades. However, one manner in which interpersonal relations can surface in retellings of combat, is when veterans refer to fallen comrades and the emotional reaction this caused. This is in contrast to recollections of other soldiers who survived combat unhurt, in instances where a comrade was wounded or killed, soldiers develop an intensified sense of social connection towards the fallen individuals. Where the death of a fellow soldier is involved, the narrative of a retelling switches from the teller, to emphasise the link between the fallen and the survivor. It has been a common observation that soldiers in certain circumstances can develop deep emotional links with the dead, be they with fallen comrades or enemies.²⁸ Bourke found it was often the case throughout the Twentieth Century that soldiers would become emotionally invested in the death of others from both within and outside their social group. Searle demonstrated this when he described the loss of two friends in combat with Chinese forces:

The other platoon had come under fire. The Sergeant in charge of their section had been shot and killed and my two friends, Charlie Gordon and David Livingston... They were both killed... They were two really great lads. National Servicemen, same as myself. I think, if I hadn't had been on the mortar course, I'd have been with them in that section and I'd have been killed too.²⁹

Searle clearly shows a great deal of emotion when his recollection reached the point during the battle when his friends Charlie and David were killed. The social

²⁸ J. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, PP. 217- 135.

²⁹ Pte. Searle, (IWM18470), Reel 3.

bonds he had with these men became the focus of his testimony, with their exact relationship and commonality with Searle being explicitly mentioned. He clearly links his shared social identity with both men emphasising how they were all National Servicemen, specifically stating that they were the 'same as myself'. Extending this even further, he expects that even if he had just been in their section when they were killed, he would have been killed too. Through this Searle clearly demonstrates the emphasis death put on these men's social bonds, highlighting what made them similar and reflecting on how he escaped their fate. From testimonies such as this, it would appear that whilst combat could not generate new social bonds in quite as spontaneous a fashion as might be expected, the death of a comrade could place a special emphasis on men's social bonds. However, this seems to have only become apparent in veterans' testimonies after the fact and upon subsequent reflection, rather than as it happened. Combat bonding therefore was not a natural and immediate way in which men became close, but rather an extension of a group identity. It was indeed capable of strengthening a bond between soldiers, but only once anonymity from the generic group had been removed, only once a soldier became a named person, such as in death, could social bonding then become emphasised on a personal level.

Tea, Alcohol and Drinking as a Social Focal Point

One of the most important aspects of social interactions between soldiers was the group consumption of drinks. Both in terms of alcoholic and non- alcoholic beverages, drinking in groups has provided a key component of social life for soldiers throughout the ages. Drinking had something of a special significance to the social lives of soldiers, Emma Newlands suggests this manifested itself in almost ritualistic bonding process that created friendships from recruitment

onwards. This is true for many conflicts, not just the Korean War and as such drinking represents yet another way in which certain themes carried on in soldiers' lives throughout the Twentieth Century. One of the many tropes of life in the British Army was the prevalence of tea drinking. The act of making, distributing and consuming tea as a group was a valuable part of the social repertoire of British soldiers on the frontlines of Korea. It provided an opportunity to exercise caring behaviours for others by making and sharing it, as well as providing a moment to sit down and drink it with those around you. This is not counting the added benefits a warm caffeinated drink can have in a cold mountainous trench line. John Dutton, an American working with the Royal Engineers noted the response of the British troops after escaping a fire fight in which their vehicle was disabled, 'As soon as we were clear, they immediately put the kettle on and started to make 'gunfire', a potent mixture of tea and their rum rations'.³⁰ The sitting down with each other for a drink of tea, alcohol or in this case both, was a common socially driven coping mechanism for soldiers. It essentially calmed the air, bringing back a sense of normality following an abnormal shock. Of course, it was not simply the drink which proved valuable in this situation, but the social contact itself. It was primal group reassurance in the same manner as sitting around the fire at home. The alcohol it seems was used merely to give the situation an added boost of calm. It was a reminder of home and bringing that to one's fellow soldiers could endear a man to the social group. Private Brian Hough of the King's Regiment found to his surprise that he had developed a reputation for his tea making skills in Korea which endured many years after the conflicts end:

This lad who was with me, Welsh lad, had been hit, I believe his last name was George... Billy George, I think. Straight away we knew he'd lost an eye and so he was evacuated. I didn't see him again for forty years. Now, a few years ago, I had gone to a reception Prince Charles held in London and invited Korea Veterans and Billy George was there and he recognised me.

³⁰ J. Dutton, P.26.

It turned out that apparently, I had quite a reputation amongst all of the lads that wherever we were I could always knock a good brew together. Now he comes up to me and we were in St. James Palace in this bloody great room full of people and he stands just about my sitting room's length away from me perhaps and he shouts 'Isn't it time you bloody brewed up!?'.³¹

Hough's meeting with George revealed just how significant tea making, or 'Brewing up' was for soldiers on the lines. Despite not seeming to be particularly close whilst in Korea and then having been absent from each other's lives for four decades, Billy was able to remember and recognise Hough immediately because of his abilities to make tea. Hough describes how he had apparently developed a reputation for being able to make a good cup of tea regardless of circumstances amongst many other veterans. This was the key thing Billy George and several other veterans remembered about Hough and the fact that they specifically remembered his ability to make good tea in bad situations is also significant. Michael Roper highlighted how in many of the 'classic accounts of life in the trenches', there was an especially valuable social bond focused on this very ability.³² For example, in Remarque's *All Quiet on The Western Front*, the ability to provide food and drink in even the most unpromising situations granted an almost magical quality to the character Kat, which endeared him to his fellow soldiers.³³ It would appear therefore, that even though Hough as not aware of it at the time, being a good provider of tea became an important social bond between himself and his fellow troops.

The drinking of alcohol too remained as a social focal point with little difference from how it had been in the Second World War. Alcohol was both a social tool and recognised vent, which officers would often turn a blind eye to, or even encourage as a way of coping with the general stresses of life on deployment.³⁴ Even the

³¹ Pte. Brian Hough, (IWM 34705), Reel 3.

³² M. Roper, *The Secret Battle*, P. 126

³³ E. M. Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, (London, 1966), P. 69.

³⁴ E. Newlands, P. 75.

official administrative regulations of the British army recognised the importance of supplying its units with an adequate supply of alcohol. Companies were allocated a beer ration, which was tied directly to how many used bottles it returned to its allocated NAAFI.³⁵ As much as general behaviour in the daily routine was conducted to strict rules, soldiers in Korea found release in drinking alcohol during free time and it became a valuable social coping mechanism. Aside from the standard rations of alcohol the British Army provided to its soldiers, there was an ample supply of unsanctioned alcoholic liquids available for purchase and as ever their consumption was central to many soldiers' social experience. The use of these substances was observed frequently in Korea, with the Imperial War Museum describing them as key components of a soldier's life.³⁶ Winspear recounted how when the Duke of Wellington's held a fete on the reserve lines in aid of flooding in the United Kingdom, the mere potential promise of alcohol could bring the men of his unit together:

We had a fete to raise funds for the communities in East Anglia who'd been affected by flooding. I ran a hoopla stall with coconuts and such. The top prizes were a few bottles of beer. Unsurprisingly, our stall proved to be the most popular stall at the whole fete. At the end of the day I think we'd made something like three hundred pounds for the flood relief. [...] That night I decided to do duty at the Intelligence office in case anything came in while everyone else was off and I ended up drinking my way through Jeff Cork's bottle of sherry. Until the battle adjutant, Major Firth, came in who brought another bottle of sherry and we got fairly well through that one too.³⁷

We can see from Winspear's memories that alcohol did indeed have the capacity to bring soldiers together. With only the promise of a few drinks Winspear's stall was able to raise what would amount to around six and a half thousand pounds in today's money. Thus, demonstrating just how much potential the mere promise of just a bottle of beer could have for soldiers on the frontlines. Just as it had been in

³⁵ TNA, WO 281/2, General Routine Orders, 78 (a), Quarter Master General's Branch Rationing of Beer.

³⁶ IWM (KOR616); IWM (MH32677).

³⁷ Sgt. L. Winspear, (IWM 21593), Reel 3.

past conflicts, alcohol could be a release for men from the daily strict routine of military life and a strong bonding tool.³⁸ Additionally, when Winspear's superior officer Major Firth caught him drunk, instead of reprimanding him, the major actually joined in with the drinking, revelling in the release the inactivity on the line provided. We can also see from these accounts how important the consumption of alcohol could be for group recovery from stress. Major Firth, a Battle Adjutant, had a highly pressured job, from which he willingly overlooked punishment and joined in social drinking to escape. The importance of this effect on soldiers was well recognised by army authority in other ways in Korea. It was not uncommon for officers and NCOs to be more than willing to turn a blind eye to soldiers who were exceeding their officially allowed ration of alcohol. In some of these cases, superiors were not only tolerant, but were actively complicit in providing their men with additional alcohol in certain circumstances. Lucock described an officer's role surprise gift of beer on his 21st Birthday:

My Platoon Commander was a chap named Williams, a really nice man. He was handing out the post and these cards arrived for me on my birthday. He asked me 'How old are you?' and I said 'Twenty-one today, Sir'. I was a corporal then and due to take a patrol out that night. When I went down for briefing, he sent me back to my hutch and inside there were two crates of ale, sixteen bottles in each and a note from the platoon saying 'enjoy yourself'. I was still drunk the next day, the Sergeant wasn't happy but Williams told him to give me the day to recover. I inquired after Mr Williams at a reunion. I was told he died of a massive heart attack shortly after the war. I was sad to hear that.³⁹

Even though this was not a case of direct group consumption of alcohol, it is undoubtedly evidence of the use of alcohol as a sort of social currency within the group. The communal gifting of alcohol as a birthday present was more than a token of wellbeing between troops in the field, but a prime example of the ritualised use of alcohol in group bonding described by Newlands⁴⁰. Lucock's

³⁸ E. Newlands, P. 75.

³⁹ James Lucock, in S. Kelly, P. 129.

⁴⁰ E. Newlands, P. 77.

Platoon Commander, Williams, not only organised the platoon to provide him with the alcohol as a gesture of group celebration, but also suspended the Sergeant's punishment for drunkenness. This provides further evidence that officers were willing to overlook and even defend alcohol consumption for the sake of men's social and emotional welfare. The effect of this on the social group is traceable in Lucock's fondness for Williams, describing him as a 'really nice man' and expressing sadness at the news of his death. In some circumstances, officers did not just overlook the presence of excess alcohol, but ensured the men had access to it. In this regard, alcohol took the form of a social currency, which could be traded and spent in times of stress as a coping mechanism. Ronnie Taylor recalled that when he was placed in charge of the Durham Light Infantry's beer rations, he noticed the demand for alcohol went up after fighting:

I was in charge of issuing out the drinks and alongside the NAFFI and whenever we had an excess, we were allowed to sell it on and there wasn't a lot else to spend your money on. See, us Brits were the only ones who could get the stuff issued, but people would always want more. I mean everyone always found some, or we got the stuff from home, but there was always good money to be made selling it after the pay packets came in. We'd get Americans, Canadians, Australians, all sorts coming along and buying or trading for what they could. People wanted it especially badly if there had been a lot of fighting going on, I remember one night the Australians had been in some fierce fighting up along the line and these two lads came through and bought eighty quid of the stuff off us for their platoon, which was a lot of money in those days.⁴¹

Taylor's description demonstrated just how important alcohol could be as a social coping mechanism, not just amongst British forces, but for other troops stationed along the Korean frontlines. After what he described as particularly fierce fighting, Taylor recalled how two Australian soldiers bought eighty pounds of surplus beer from the Durham Light Infantry for their platoon. In all likelihood the large amount of beer sold was to be used to help the men of the Australian unit cope with the strain of surviving a major fire fight. However, Taylor also recalled that men from

⁴¹ Pte. Ronnie Taylor, (Interview with Drew Ryder, 23/3/2018).

many other national armies came to buy spare alcohol from the British. Clearly, drinking was not only an important social tool for the British to bond with, but was also common amongst other forces in Korea.

Postal Communication and Social Connections Home

One of the assumptions commonly made about soldier's lives in Korea is that they were isolated and in a social vacuum away from home. It is understandable how this view became prevalent in the years following the conflict's end. Across British society during and after the Korean War, there was a general apathy to the conflict itself and to the soldiers serving there.⁴² Korea did not occupy national headlines on a day to day basis and relatively few families had members serving in combat, especially in comparison to the Second World War. All of this, coupled with the fact that Korea was practically half a world away from Britain, makes it entirely understandable as to how the view that the Korea War was an isolated came about. However, examination of archives and oral testimonies shows that troops deployed in Korea were actually very well connected to the social contacts they had back in Britain. This communication with friends and family back home could be just as important a social mechanism for soldiers as the immediate interpersonal relations with their social group. For soldiers in Korea, postal and long-range communication was a very important element in their social routine, whether they were active letter writers or not. For some the very act of communicating with home provided valuable emotional links with their distant family, as Roper described of soldiers in the First World War.⁴³ Others found the arrival of post became an opportunity for socialising amongst fellow soldiers on deployment. The value of the social support which contact back home provided

⁴² G. Huxford, *The Korean War in Britain*, PP. 30- 32.

⁴³ M. Roper, *The Secret Battle*, PP. 50- 53.

was clearly recognised by the British Army and at both an administrative and practical level, soldiers were encouraged to write or otherwise stay in contact with their families in Britain. Lines of communication were actively maintained right up to the frontlines and routine orders from Commonwealth Headquarters frequently updated battalions with the latest postal rates for a wide variety of delivery options.⁴⁴ This level of encouragement was such that the 'Forces Letter Card' which was the most basic service offered by the army, could be delivered by air mail to anywhere in the UK, Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore, Gibraltar or Malta, or wherever was listed as the sender's homeland completely free of charge.⁴⁵ Brian Hough described how effective this system of communication was for keeping contact with family members back home in England, recalling:

There was no restriction on letters. I wrote home and got letters from my Mum quite frequently. I can't remember how they were collected; I think somebody must have come along and taken them off us when we received the last mail. My mum always used to send me the Saturday night *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, the pink one with all the football results. By the time I got it of course it was about a month out of date.⁴⁶

Hough's description gives a glimpse into how effective and valuable the postal system was for men on the frontlines. Hough was easily able to remain in close and frequent contact with his mother back in Britain and although there was around a month's delay on the arrival of post, he was able to keep abreast of news and even football scores at home. The fact that communication between soldiers on the frontlines and families at home was so effective presents a different view of the Korean War from the idea of it being a distant and isolated conflict. It is true that for the general population in Britain, Korea was not their pressing daily concern and there was a general national apathy regarding the conflict. This was one of the primary contributing factors to the conflict earning the title of 'the

⁴⁴ TNA, WO 281/2, Appendix J- Postage Rates.

⁴⁵ Ibid, Appendix J (A).

⁴⁶ Brian Hough, in S. Kelly, *British Soldiers of the Korean War*, PP. 129- 130.

forgotten war' in subsequent years. However, we can also clearly see from veterans' testimony that the families and loved ones of soldiers were actively engaging with them. The very fact that the postal links between soldiers and their contacts in Britain were so efficient demonstrate that Korea was not as isolated a conflict as has been thought. Roy Cox underlines this perfectly in his statement on keeping regular contact with his sister in Britain:

My Sister used to write to me and I got a letter from my father about once a year, he was not a big letter writer at all, but my sister wrote regularly. I used to write home to my sister as well, more than I wrote to anyone else. I would write when I was looking after the wireless sets and the telephone lines. She was very good to me.⁴⁷

What Cox describes can be broken down into a few key points. Firstly, like many other soldiers he was keeping up social contact with individuals in the UK, demonstrating that at least for family members in Britain, the war in Korea was far from the peripheral edge of consciousness. More importantly however, he highlights that to soldiers on the frontlines, national news and home events were less important to soldiers in Korea compared to personal and family news. This shows that soldiers on the frontlines of Korea were not isolated, but instead prioritised intimate social links over news. The post for soldiers in Korea was as it always has been, more than just a morale booster. One of Roper's key themes was the idea that even on frontlines of the First World War, the social experiences of soldiers were not isolated from the home front and further more they were highly important to the soldiers themselves.⁴⁸ Many soldiers kept the more cherished letters close to heart in chest pockets and fretted over their condition. Although noted during the First World War, it was also a feature in the social lives of soldiers fighting thirty-six years later in Korea. In spite of the considerable distance between Korea and the UK, the soldier's experience in Korea remained intimately

⁴⁷ Roy Cox, in S. Kelly, *British Soldiers of the Korean War*, PP. 131.

⁴⁸ M. Roper, PP. 47- 74.

connected to the home front through social communication. Private Ivan Williams spoke of how writing home and the effectiveness of post as a social tool allowed him to stay occupied and how a fellow soldier allowed him into his social network:

Any news from home was good. We felt forgotten and anything from home was good. The great unsung heroes of the war were the postal service. I was getting letters from the UK to the frontline within a week sometimes. They were airmailed to Japan, but the fact that they could find the unit and then find you on the frontline in less than a week was astonishing. There was post collection as well a couple of times a week so that you could always write home. You had a lot of time to do nothing so I wrote quite a lot of letters. In fact, I got a pen pal. One of the fellas I was with persuaded his sister and all her friends to write to us when we were in Hong Kong first, then Korea. It was nice to get letters from anyone, of course I had never met the lady I was writing to but I eventually married her. She was my pen pal and I only met her when I came home. Four years later we were married, so I have a lot to thank Korea for, I wouldn't have met my wife otherwise.⁴⁹

Williams's account illustrates several elements of how important the post was for soldier's social wellbeing on the front. He discusses how positive an effect receiving post from home had on men at the front and reiterates the details of how effective the channels of communication back to the UK were, being able to get messages back within a week in some cases. Williams also clearly details how the writing of letters proved to be an important way for some soldiers to keep themselves occupied during period of inactivity on the front. Undoubtedly, this was one of the reasons why the army was so keen to promote writing amongst its troops, as it provided a break from the practical duties and strains of frontline life. In his testimony, Williams recalled how he first made contact with and developed feelings for his future wife through postal contact in Korea. He repeated several times how important and pleasant it was for him to receive post from home and clearly demonstrates the significance the social contact the post provided on a personal level. Contact from home made him feel remembered and socially cared for, as opposed to isolated and alone. Given what Williams describes and the

⁴⁹ Ivan Williams, in S. Kelly, PP. 131- 132.

accounts of other soldiers, it would suggest that the desire for and importance of social connections through the post was not one way. Families and friends back in the United Kingdom appear to have also been seeking to stay in contact with their loved ones in Korea as much as possible, writing back just as often as soldiers wrote home. Similar connections were noted in First World War accounts of families writing to the front. Using diaries and letters, Roper explained how relations in the UK treasured the social contact the post provided with their loved ones and used it to ease their uncertainties about not knowing the fate of the men on the front.⁵⁰ Each letter assured them that their loved ones were still alive and thinking of them, just as Williams suggested he felt receiving post from home. This is further supported by events recalled by William Hurst, when he incurred wrath from his mother and commanding officer for not writing home:

I wasn't one for writing. My mother actually wrote to my company commander saying that she had not heard from her son for so many months and I had to go in front of the Commanding Officer and he said 'We've had a letter from your mother, she says you've not been writing home, why is that? I said 'Well I've nothing to say, sir' and he said, 'well you're writing tonight and I want it on my desk in the morning'. I didn't want her to worry so I couldn't tell her we're being bombed and shot so I just wrote: 'Dear Mam, hope you are okay as it leaves me, Bill'. I took the letter to the CO the next morning and he read it and just laughed and shook his head.⁵¹

Clearly Hurst's mother was worried and keenly desired information about her son. Similarly, it seems his commanding officer was keen that he write home too, apparently for his mother's sake as much as his own. From this we can see not only how senior officers were keenly aware of the effect writing could have not just on the soldier's but, as Roper described, how important it was for men's families back home. The unwillingness of Hurst to write to his mother does not necessarily show a lack of care, but rather the contrary. He explained how the brevity of his

⁵⁰ M. Roper, PP. 48- 50.

⁵¹ William Hurst, in S. Kelly, P. 130

letter was due to him not wanting to worry his family with news of him being in danger. What this instead shows is that Hurst was exhibiting a behavior of concealment, whereby soldiers writing home were very attuned to the impact such bad news could have on family back home. Roper describes this as having such an effect in the First World War as to effectively become a form of self-driven censorship.⁵² The fact that Hurst did not wish to tell his mother of the danger he was in, was far more a sign that he was still being kind and considerate to her, rather than being socially isolated. What is also made evident is how the officer cared for the emotional welfare of fellow soldiers. Perhaps it was for a similar reason why Williams's friend sought to use the post to intertwine his own personal social connections with the other men in his unit. Williams told of how his friend had made arrangements for his sister and her friends to write to the other soldiers in his unit when they arrived in Korea. As Williams stated this provided them with a welcome channel of communication and gave them more to write about as coping mechanism during down time. More than this though, it allowed the social lives men developed in the frontlines to flow back along the channels of communication. Williams' friend used the connection provided by the post to bring his social life in the UK and link it strongly with his social group in Korea. This demonstrates not only the significance of postal communication, but also how soldiers recognised it and used it as an act of care and kindness to their companions on the frontline.

Social Activities on Leave

Although soldiers still on duty in Korea were by no means isolated from their relatives and friends back home, leave in Japan provided even greater access to their home social lives. This was especially helpful for soldiers who had been sent back from the frontline in Korea to recover in Japan. Private John Sykes was sent

⁵² M. Roper, PP. 63- 68.

for recuperation in Kure after he had suffered a shrapnel wound to his arm. In his recollection to the Imperial War Museum, he explained just how effective channels of communication home to Britain could be and how well connected the Korean theatre was as a whole:

They sent us to Kure in Japan and in the Australia ward they had to redo all my arm. I got to stay in Kure quite a long time. While I was there, my sister knew a friend of ours was in the Pay Corps, so she wrote to him to say I was in recuperation in Kure and so he came down and saw me. My time there with the care they showed me was unbelievable, brilliant.⁵³

Sykes's description of his time in Kure demonstrates just how effective communication with the UK was from Japan compared to Korea and how beneficial it could be. Whilst he was recovering, he was evidently able to write home and inform his sister of his predicament, who was in turn able to contact their old friend in the Pay Corps in time for him to meet Sykes in Kure. Additionally, we can see how much of a positive effect having a friend close at hand was for Sykes while he was recovering. Despite the severity of his injuries, which were substantial, Sykes reported that his time in Kure was in his opinion brilliant. Doubtless the social support from his friend and contact with his family was a major factor in how he felt about this.

Time in Japan was not always dependent upon being wounded and recuperating. All British troops stationed on the Korean peninsula were allotted up to five days leave from their time deployed. If granted, soldiers would travel via U.S logistical channels to either Tokyo or Kure, depending on the circumstances of their departure.⁵⁴ Social time spent in Japan was much different for British troops than what they were allowed in Korea. There was a wealth of activities open to allied

⁵³ Pte. John William Sykes, 1st Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 14/10/2002, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 20850), Reel 2.

⁵⁴ TNA, WO 281/3, General Routine Orders, 22 (a), Regarding Leave.

troops in Japanese cities, whereas access to towns and cities on the war-torn peninsula was strictly limited for UK personnel. Amongst other activities such as cinema trips, restaurant eating and even a sailing club, British and commonwealth personnel were offered the opportunity for trips to visit various cultural sites around Japan while on leave.⁵⁵ Whilst most excursions proved relatively minor distractions, some of these trips could include harsh reminders of how recently the Second World War had ended and in some cases, revealed stark dangers of escalation in Korea. The stand out memory Brian Hough recalled from his time in Kure was a tour he and various other members of commonwealth forces were given of Hiroshima:

The Sergeant came up to me and said 'have you ever flown?' and I thought they might be sending me home, but I said no. He says 'Well you are tomorrow; you're going to Japan'. While I was there, they asked a load of us if anyone would like to go and visit Hiroshima, it was only seven years after the bomb but they'd started to rebuild. They took a coachload of us, Australians, Canadians, British and oh dear me the devastation was enormous, particularly near the epicentre. Our guide was a survivor of the bomb and the stories that could tell us, by God it was horrifying, people with radiation burns dying in the river and all sorts. I thought that there's no defence against this, I was worried that it might escalate to that in Korea where we were fighting, but of course it was never something I talked about though, we had more immediate things to worry about.⁵⁶

While there had been fear of the Korean War escalating to a nuclear conflict in Britain during the early days of the war, this was not something which extended to troops on the frontlines.⁵⁷ Most British soldiers generally were more concerned with their immediate tasks at hand rather than the risk of a global conflict. However, Hough's trip into Hiroshima changed his view of the threat the weapons posed. Visiting the devastated remains of the city and speaking to a survivor about the aftermath of the atomic blast seems to have deeply concerned Hough. As a result, he became very concerned with the lack of defence against nuclear

⁵⁵ TNA, WO 281/4, General Routine Orders, 51, Notice- Sailing Club established in Kure.

⁵⁶ Pte. Brian Hough, (IWM 34705), Reel 3.

⁵⁷ G. Huxford, *The Korean War in Britain*, P. 31- 35.

weapons and worried that Korea might escalate to a nuclear conflict. Despite this however, this was not something he discussed with fellow troops once he returned from Japan. It is surprising that the army would allow its soldiers to visit the remains of Hiroshima given the effect it had on Hough and doubtless the soldiers of various other nationalities who joined him. The fact that tours to such sensitive areas could take place demonstrate just how much more freedom troops who had been fighting in Korea had whilst in Japan.

Unlike Korea, where British troops were confined either to their frontline positions or to guarded transit camps, Japan offered men the ability to more or less go where they wanted and do what they pleased, albeit with some caveats. Leave in Japan did not completely free a soldier from the strict control of British Army regulations. Personal activities were limited to authorised areas and pre-approved establishments. Every action British soldiers undertook had to be accountable back to the Commonwealth Headquarters. This even extended to which taxi services British personnel were authorised to employ whilst in Japan.⁵⁸ One of the primary motivations behind the army's continued regulation of the soldier's body once on leave was an attempt to limit what Newlands termed as contact with 'dangerous others'.⁵⁹ This was army shorthand for the dangers soldiers incurred by seeking sexual relations with prostitutes. As one might expect, this was not something commonly discussed by veterans when recounting their own personal experiences of the serving in Korea or on leave. Perhaps more so than discussing killing and even admitting to feelings of fear or enjoyment in battle, sexual infidelity whilst on deployment carried a very real stigma, especially in the society of the 1950s, which means that very few veterans were willing to discuss the matter in

⁵⁸ TNA, WO 281/2, General Routine Orders, 99 (a), regarding Japanese Taxi Services.

⁵⁹ E. Newlands, P. 122.

years following. That being said, there are some rare instances of its mention, as well as official actions taken by the army itself, which indicate that it was a common enough activity to require regulation. It was identified at the time that rates of venereal disease cases amongst U.S troops were up to three times higher in the Korean War than they had been during the Second World War, and that rates of infection amongst Commonwealth Forces, particularly the Canadians, were even higher.⁶⁰ Although it was clearly something that many soldiers engaged in, sexual activity, particularly engaging with prostitution, was not something many veterans admit to of their own experience. Perhaps more so than discussing killing, discussing sexual activity was considered taboo and stigmatised throughout the Twentieth Century and still to this day. For this reason, very few veterans of the Korean War were willing to discuss the matter at all. Where it is spoken of in recollections, sexual activity is referenced through implications or in discussing men's colleagues, rather than a direct admission that they themselves engaged in sexually promiscuous behaviour. Private Joseph Strode was one of the rare veterans who directly discussed engaging in prostitution whilst on leave in Japan and recalled the great deal of difficulty it caused him and a friend.

When we were in Japan, me and this other fellow Dempsey his name was, he was a bit of a lad, stayed one night in a hotel and the manager comes up to us and says do we want a girl because he can sort it all out for us. Anyway, the next morning we had to pay and we didn't have enough money. So, he said that Dempsey should have to go back to camp and get more money and I had to stay there as a sort of hostage I suppose and we had to hand over our paybooks. You couldn't do anything without those paybooks so when we got back to Korea, we had no paybooks so we couldn't get paid. This went on for about three or four weeks so we paid someone to forge new ones. An officer caught us and got us confined to

⁶⁰ Col. J. McNinch, 'Venereal Disease Problems, US Armed Forces, Far East 1950–1953', in US Army Medical Service Graduate School, *Recent Advances in Medicine and Surgery: Based on Professional Medical Experiences in Japan and Korea 1950–1953*, (Washington DC, 1954), P. 145; TNA, WO 279/610, Report of the Army, 1951- 1952.

barracks for three weeks, he said we were lucky because we could have got five years for forgery outside the army.⁶¹

Strode's account demonstrates firstly one of the many reasons why the army was keen to prevent its soldiers from engaging with illicit relations and secondly the extent to which prostitution carried a stigma in the ranks, despite evidence to suggest it was commonplace. The way in which the hotel manager was able to lever the situation over Strode and Dempsey by holding their paybooks hostage shows just how vulnerable soldiers could be in these situations, embarrassing themselves and potentially the army itself. Secondly, the lengths Strode goes to tiptoe around the issue of prostitution, even after having discussed losing his paybook and several weeks' pay, reveal just how sensitive an issue it was to discuss. Although that it is heavily implied that Strode or Dempsey 'the lad' engaged in sexual activities with a prostitute, Strode does not openly or explicitly state that he and his friend actually hired the prostitute, only that they did not have the money to pay the hotel manager in the morning. The fact that Strode choose his words so as not to directly discuss the hiring of the sex worker further demonstrates just how awkward a topic this was for veterans to discuss in their subsequent testimonies. Partially, the reason for this stigma, especially amongst British Soldiers, was that there was still a lingering attitude in the British Army of 1950 that signs of troops engaging with prostitutes, and especially V.D cases, represented a moral failing and an associated lack of willpower.⁶² This was despite a general softening of attitudes on this matter since the First World War and that morale and discipline amongst the Commonwealth Divisions in Korea was

⁶¹ Pte. Joseph Strode, 1st Battalion, The King's Regiment, in C. Shindler, *National Service, From Aldershot to Aden: Tales from the Conscripts, 1946- 62*, (London, 2012), P. 87.

⁶² Megan Fitzpatrick, 'Prostitutes, Penicillin and Prophylaxis: Fighting Venereal Disease in The Commonwealth Division during the Korean War, 1950- 1953', *Social History of Medicine*, 28:3, (2015), PP. 555- 575.

consistently high.⁶³ A partial explanation for this was the ideal of the post-war British soldier in wider society was portrayed as 'a typical British male, free and self-directed, but his freedom (including his sexual freedom) was bounded by a sense of responsibility, moderation and "good form"'.⁶⁴ Additionally, since the end of the Second World War, there had been several high-profile cases brought to the attention of the media of British and Commonwealth troops engaging in sexual activity with prostitutes or 'Diggers' whilst stationed abroad.⁶⁵ With the moral outrage that followed, it is not hard to see how and why wider societal expectations of how a British soldier should behave were effecting the attitudes of soldiers on the ground in Korea. This is even evident in Strode's actions, given that he and Dempsey preferred to forgo pay for several weeks and risking forging documents rather than admit to their seniors that the books were lost whilst in the pursuit of sex. It is also fairly easy to conclude that having soldiers practically held hostage as a result of hiring a prostitute and resultantly forging paperwork was not something the British Army would be keen to promote. Short of confining all personnel to barracks in Japan, an act which would render the whole point of leave redundant, it was very difficult to prevent instances like this from occurring off base in practical terms. One way in which the army could limit, if not prevent this from occurring was to increase restrictions on who British soldiers were allowing or bringing back to their officially designated areas, which is precisely

⁶³ David French, *Army, Empire and the Cold War: The British Army and Military Policy, 1945–1971* (Oxford, 2012), P. 141.

⁶⁴ Mark Harrison, 'Sex and the Citizen Soldier: Health, Morals and Discipline in the British Army during the Second World War', in Cooter et al., (eds), *Medicine and Modern Warfare* (Amsterdam, 1999), PP. 225- 250.

⁶⁵ 'Someone Has Blundered: Japan Bungle Over Diggers', *Sunday Mail*, 3rd March 1946, P 4; 'Forgotten Army in Japan ACTION URGED TO END GREIVANCES', *Courier-Mail*, 8th October 1946, P. 4; 'Moral Laxity Fears in Japan Force— Diggers' Move', *Sunday Mail*, 29th February 1948, P. 3.

what was done. By the spring of 1951 Commonwealth Headquarters had been forced to issue explicit guidelines on which civilians were permitted into these British troop areas, as well as much stricter regulations on how passes and permissions were granted.⁶⁶ The nature of these new guidelines makes it clear that only contractors and labourers were to be permitted in areas occupied by British Army personnel unless expressly permitted by the areas adjutant or commanding officer. The implications of this are clear in that the regulations would specifically exclude female company and sex workers from entering British bases. Similar measures were taken to regulate sexual behaviour on bases throughout the Second World War.⁶⁷ The effectiveness of these measures in the 1940s was limited, as for all the education and efforts the army put into limiting men's sexual appetites, records of venereal disease always seemed to escalate when troops were on deployment.⁶⁸ Given Strode's testimony, it would appear that this was also the case during the Korean War. We know from Private Roy Martian's account of his journey to Korea that the army was still investing serious effort in warning soldiers off sexual activities whilst on active service. However, as the account of Strode and the measures the army was forced to take indicate, it seems that sex and prostitution was still a major part of soldier's release whilst on leave.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ TNA, WO 281/2, General Routine Orders 94, regarding Japanese Nationals Entering UK Troop Areas.

⁶⁷ E. Newlands, P. 125; TNA, WO177/1, Director of Medical Services, British Expeditionary Force, Medical Administrative Instructions 12- 23.

⁶⁸ M. Harrison, *Medicine and Victory, British Military Medicine in the Second World War*, (Oxford 2004), P. 153

⁶⁹ Pte. Roy Martin, Royal Army Ordinance Corps, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 01/07/2007, Peter Hart, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 30011), Reel 3.

Conclusion

Social connections and bonding were clearly a major coping mechanism for soldiers on the frontlines of Korea. Social behaviours therefore were central to the day to day experience of these men and were just as much a part of their lives as any other aspect of the conflict. Just as the wave of new military history showed that this was true of soldiers in the World Wars and other more well recognised conflicts, oral testimony has shown that this was equally true of Korea. These were real people with real human needs and social interactions were tremendously important to each and every individual. One of the primary forms of the social support network soldiers provided for each other was simple, person to person friendships. Be this in the form of close individual friendships or webs of groups, friendship provided the backbone of social lives in Korea. Individual friendships were highly important to men on the frontlines. Individuals maintained contact with one and other as often as possible and would extend great acts of kindness to one and other. These friendships could transcend demographics such as age and background and allowed soldiers to look out for one and other during times of stress. Group friendships were just as close as individual relationships. Men would seek the comfort and support offered by a close social group as often as was possible when not separated by their duties. This extended to sleeping alongside one and other in groups, eating together and receiving post as a group. All of this reinforced interpersonal connection and provided a comfort throughout difficult times spent on the frontlines. The closeness of these social groups allowed soldiers to participate in acts of very close caring with one and other. In these cases, men took to behaviours which represented an almost parental level of care for one and other. This extended to looking after each other's health and well-being, to scolding and reprisals. These activities were done for the benefit of

soldiers as individuals and in the interests of the group as a whole. The potency of these behaviours for helping soldiers cope with life on the front is clearly seen in testimonies in which soldiers were not able to develop bonds a close social group. Social isolation proved to be a horribly diminishing experience for soldiers in such an unfortunate circumstance, as they were effectively denied any of the benefits a close social group could bring. The results of a soldier's social environment were not always beneficial however. In an effort to project what they perceived as an image of a good soldier, be this through the lens of masculinity, nationality or otherwise, soldiers would attempt to conceal their stresses and true reactions to danger from the wider group. One of the strongest bonds between soldiers was the group acquisition, making of and consumption of tea and alcoholic drinks. Tea in particular was valued as it provided a welcome reminder of home and a comforting break from the stresses of warfare. Men cherished those who provided them with 'a good brew' sometimes even years after the conflict's end. Similarly, alcohol provided an opportunity for men to bond both interpersonally and as a group. Alcohol represented both a social currency for bringing troops together and a tool to help cope with stress. This was particularly true after a period of fierce fighting. After which, both tea and alcohol were used to help soldiers calm their nerves and bond over what had happened. Away from home, soldiers also used the postal service to tap into their original social sphere of family. Troops maintained complex social and emotional links with loved ones back in Britain, defying the notion that Korea was an isolated war, on the far edge of public consciousness. Both families at home and the soldiers themselves were keenly aware of each other and kept up close communication. The post could also be a valuable social tool for soldiers to link their emotional connections with home, to their immediate social group. The sharing of such an intimate and emotionally

powerful link with home was a potent way of cementing group bonds in Korea. Soldiers shared packages from home and every newsletter and comic would be passed around and shared. This social inclusion was an excellent demonstration of how men connected their home life with their immediate social bonds to the extent that men recommended each other pen pals and helped forge future long-term relationships. Such was the value of the postal communication with home for men's social and emotional wellbeing that the army staunchly encouraged men to write as often as possible. Men also found opportunities to relax and unwind whilst they were on leave in Japan. The relatively greater freedom afforded by their time in Japan allowed soldiers to engage in a wide range of activities otherwise unavailable to them in Korea. This was partially made up of more mundane forms of entertainment such as boating and cinema trips. However, men could also travel on cultural visits to sites around Japan, including more controversial sites such as the ruins of Hiroshima. The greater freedom, though not absolute, also allowed men to engage in more promiscuous social activities, including prostitution. Although it was widespread enough to have been noticed by the army and warranted official regulations be put in place to limit it, the attitude held by general society in Britain towards it proved to hold sway even in Korea. All in all, the social experience of soldiers in Korea was central to their experience generally. It came from many motivations and was expressed in a great manner of ways, however, the presence of a social group and the need to maintain bonds and integrate with within said social group was present in soldiers experience at all times during service during the Korean War.

Chapter 6: Being Forgotten First-hand and the Post-War Experience.

The Forgotten Army

Although combat operations in Korea ceased in 1953, the experience of the conflict for its veterans was far from over. What we can see from their testimonies of their own post-war experiences reveals a great deal, not only about how the men themselves reintegrated into British Society, but also we can gain a tremendous insight into that society itself and how it allowed Korea to slip from its popular memory. During his interview with the Imperial War Museum in 2003, former Lance Corporal Benjamin Whitchurch suddenly raised his opinion on the government and British society's reaction to veterans of the Korean War:

Talk about the Forgotten War. We were National Servicemen, being paid as National Servicemen, but we still went to a warzone. They only paid us a lump sum, because we were one point short of pensionable. The forgotten army that was us. King George and Elizabeth recognised what we were worth, but the government wouldn't and that's been it, we get nothing.¹

The Korean War is by no means unique in its common description as being 'forgotten'. Countless other conflicts, events and armies in modern history can easily be called forgotten. Indeed, there has been considerable study applied towards just how the Korean War entered into this category. Yet, still there is a facet of the Korean War in society which remains under explored. This exploration has been the first-hand experience of being forgotten in itself. Veterans of the Korean War have been keenly aware of the experience of being forgotten, since their own return from the conflict which has shaped their identities and memories of the war ever since. For the soldiers who went to Korea, their lives post-war were marked by a duality in which the Korean War was for them unforgettable and yet

¹ L/ Cpl. Benjamin Whitchurch, 1st Battalion, Gloucester Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 11/06/2003, Lindsey Baker, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 26098), Reel 6.

their experience was disregarded by society. In recent historiography, 'forgetting' has been a hotly debated topic. Even defining what 'forgetting' means and in what context to use it can be difficult. In its simplest terms, 'forgetting' can be largely defined as a failure, deliberate, or otherwise of remembrance, the opposite of being deliberately remembered.² Defining who is 'forgotten' is equally complicated, however, it can generally be said that the 'forgotten' are those whose story is broadly excluded from, or at least not yet included in the dominant historical narratives.³ The Korean War and the soldiers who fought in it most definitely meet these qualifications. This is to the extent that forgetting has become a vital element in understanding the post-war histories of Korea and the wider Cold War.⁴ Yet, this was a process which occurred throughout the post-war years for the conflict's veterans. The legacy of the Korean War is a prime case in forgetting first-hand, even before the signing of the armistice. From the very moment soldier's boarded transports bound for home, their story was inevitably overshadowed by the events of the Second World War. Confused war goals and general apathy within the population meant that the Korean War never did invoke the ideals of patriotism and global emergency as had been raised during the Second World War. The experience of men on the ground never captured the post-war imagination in popular culture in the same way as the First and Second World Wars. This has resulted in the irony that the Korean War's place in British History is most notable because of its view as being forgotten. The further irony is that the individual's experience of being forgotten has also been overlooked. A key element in the post-war experience of Korean War veterans was a lack of commemoration and

² Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History and Forgetting*, (London, 2006), P. 416; A. Forty, 'Introduction', in A. Forty & S. Kuchler, (eds.), *The Art of Forgetting*, (Oxford, 1999), PP. 8-10.

³ G. Huxford, *The Korean War in Britain, Citizenship, Selfhood and Forgetting*, (Manchester, 2018), P. 160.

⁴ Ibid, PP. 158- 159.

remembrance. The process of forgetting the Korean War was a prolonged process that has no easily defined start point, however, the seeds of collective forgetting most definitely have their origins during the Korean War itself. For example, there is the extent to which Korean War commemoration has always been side lined by the proximity to the Second World War and the efforts of remembrance directed therein. This goes hand in hand with a general apathy to the Korean War within it's time which contributed to a prolonged period of little interest in the war's individual narratives.

Post- Second World War Weariness and Apathy to Korea

One of the most notable reasons why the Korean War failed to ignite the same commemorative spirit as the Second World War was the lack of a perceivable national struggle in the eyes of British society, especially in comparison to the latter. The common reception to the conflict in the public's eyes ranged mainly between perceived fears of unwanted escalation into a full-scale World War to passing disinterest. The result was that unlike the First and Second World Wars where the burdens of the conflict were endured with a kind of national spirit, the military exertions required for the Korean War were never really 'celebrated', or at least recalled in the same manner.⁵ Society at large in Britain met the initial news of the conflict's outbreak with both a weariness of war and a general lack of knowledge towards the situation.⁶ When paired with the unclear war aims for Britain and the impression of 'remoteness' from the conflict, the general public's perception of a Korean War only grew more apathetic. At the initial outbreak of the war it proved a difficult task for the Foreign Office to explain Britain's involvement and aims of the reasons for war to the public. This was primarily because there

⁵ Ibid, PP. 30- 32.

⁶ Ibid.

was no immediate or widely perceived threat to Britain's strategic or economic interests in Korea.⁷ At the time even Winston Churchill, for many still the embodiment of Britain's Second World Wartime spirit, quipped of Korea that he had 'never heard of the bloody place'.⁸ Mass Observation articles from the start of the Korean War echo this sentiment, alongside that of indicating a fear of a wider war escalating from this minor conflict.⁹ In short, the conflict was seen as an indirect and not immediate problem, unimportant to Britain's interests, but with an alarming potential to drag a war-weary society back into a state of total war. For these reasons Korea simply did not enter into the public's imagination in the same way as the Second World War and as a result was unlikely to garner much enthusiasm from the start.¹⁰ With the end of fighting in 1953, very little in public opinion had changed. Partially due to the fact that the Korean War had remained a distant and increasingly unthreatening conflict which was partially due to the unedifying, indecisive ceasefire, there was never any great attention paid to the conflict's ending in Britain. It has since become a point of notoriety that the Ashes cricket matches of 1953 had garnered more attention from the British public than the end of fighting in Korea. Public apathy had been more or less maintained throughout the previous years as peace talks and stalemate fighting had continued.¹¹ Ivan Williams stated of the time, 'If you said to people that you had

⁷ T. Shaw, 'The Information Research Department of the British Foreign Office and The Korean War, 1950- 53', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 34:2, (1999), P. 265.

⁸ M. Gilbert, *'Never Despair': Winston Churchill, 1945- 1965*, (London, 1988), P. 861.

⁹ MOA 9-1-A, Public Opinions of the Korean War, June- July 1950; MOA 9-1-B, News Quota Survey of Public Attitudes to Korean War, July 1950; MOA 9-1-C, News Quota Survey of Public Attitudes to Korean War, August 1950.

¹⁰ Ibid, PP. 32- 42; Bodlean Library, MS Attlee 103.7, Foreign Office Memorandum 'Korea', (July, 1950); BBC, S322/85/1, S Series (Television), 'Korean News Flash', (26 June 1950); T. Shaw, P. 265.

¹¹ 'The War which was Forgotten in The Excitement of the Test Match', *Bury Free Press*, 31st July, 1953, P. 1;

'Britain's 'Forgotten Army' in Korea', *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Mercury*, 11th November 1952, P. 5.

been to Korea, they would say where?’¹² What is often overlooked in this narrative is that these feelings were not entirely unique to the home front. The soldiers who had been, or at the time were still fighting in Korea held mixed views on the war. Although most now believe they had done a good and important job at the time, many were not quite as invested in the cause. Terry Moore recalled of how the ceasefire was met with a general disinterest not only by the public, but also with a lack of purpose on his own part:

I don't think people were interested when we got home. My family was at the docks, but no one else I knew really cared. No one else I knew had been out there fighting. Today, when I think back, I didn't really feel anything towards it. I was glad when it stopped, but I didn't know if it was worthwhile.¹³

Moore describes how universal the lack of awareness about Korea was outside of his immediate family, but also how his own feelings at the time were more centred on simply being glad to be home. Many soldiers echoed Moore's words and were more relieved to simply be heading home rather than celebratory of the war's conclusion. Colonel John Lightley, then a subaltern with the Durham Light Infantry remembered that 'More than anything, I was just glad to be going home in one piece'.¹⁴ Even during the war, soldiers in Korea could have a certain apathy towards the prospect of peace. Corporal Edward Curd recalled how troops in Korea held a half-hearted interest in the peace proceedings. He said 'We'd hear talk of the peace talks, but we didn't really pay attention to it all'. He then went on to say 'They'd already went on for years and whenever there was news we'd just

¹² Ivan Williams, in S. Kelly, *British Soldiers of the Korean War in Their Own Words*, (Stroud, 2013), P. 205.

¹³ Terry Moore, in S. Kelly, P. 206.

¹⁴ Col. John Lightley, 1st Battalion, Durham Light Infantry, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 17/8/1999, Harry Moses, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 19632), Reel 11.

think 'oh no here we go again' and carry on what we was doing.¹⁵ Surprisingly this apathy towards the peace talks was not without precedent. Some Royal Air Force combatants met the end of the Second World War with similar hesitation and disinterest.¹⁶ The difference in this case was the lack of an edifying victory in the war. The veterans of the Royal Air Force and other forces of the Second World War were able to watch through the years as their role in the conflict and its subsequent victorious ending were celebrated and commemorated. On the other hand, commemoration and representation of Korean War veterans did not share this position in the national psyche.

Post-War Representation of the Korean War in the UK

One of the main themes of the history of the Korean War is its lack of representation in its own right and this has been a significant part of why the war is far less commemorated than other conflicts of the Twentieth Century. Unlike the individual's experience, this element of the Korean War has been explored at length. Huxford's work on the Korean War for example details thoroughly the lack of representation the Korean War garnered in post-war Britain. Following on from the general apathy the war garnered during its course and immediate aftermath, the lack of a decisive and edifying end point also gave little reason for subsequent cultural celebration.¹⁷ In short, Korea did not neatly fit into a usable past of Britain's military traditions, nor did it represent a positive sign for the future. The overwhelming cultural impact of the Second World War was one of the major contributing actors to the lack of cultural representation. Korea was buried under a

¹⁵ Cpl. Edward Curd, 41 Independent Commando, Royal Marines, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 9/7/1988, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 10250), Reel 4.

¹⁶ M. Francis, *The Flyer, British Culture and The Royal Air force, 1939- 1945*, (Oxford, 2008), PP. 181- 182.

¹⁷ G. Huxford, PP. 162.

saturation of material about the Second World War. The scale of this is evident in the number of movies produced about the Korean War in comparison to the Second World War. In Britain for example, there was only one single major movie produced about Korea in the immediate post-war decade, this particular movie was produced in 1956 and the name of the movie was *A Hill in Korea*.¹⁸ In contrast, within the same year there were twelve British movies released about the Second World War. This included the much more culturally significant and critically successful, *The Bridge over the River Kwai*.¹⁹ It was not just in terms of motion pictures where, despite the cultural significance of the military in post-war Britain, the Korean War remained drastically underrepresented. This was until the time in which it could be contextualised as a wider part of the Cold War. The role of the Korean War in wider narratives of the Cold War is also a strong factor in its lack of representation in its own right. In both fiction and non-fiction, the Korean War became merely a chapter in the wider histories of the fight against communism. The 1959 Novel, *The Manchurian Candidate* by Richard Condon and the following 1962 movie are perhaps the most well-known work regarding the Cold War politics to do with Korea.²⁰ In both cases, the plot features a group of United States Soldiers during the Korean War who as Prisoner Of War were brainwashed and released as communist sleeper agents. Though the work is loosely based on the experience of British Prisoner Of War in Korea and possibly specifically defector Andrew Condron, the plot has little else to do with the Korean War than as a

¹⁸ *A Hill in Korea*, Anthony Squire, (1956).

¹⁹ 'List of Second World War films, (1950- 1989), Late 1950s', *Wikipedia*, [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_World_War_II_films_\(1950%E2%80%931989\)#Late_1950s](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_World_War_II_films_(1950%E2%80%931989)#Late_1950s)], last accessed, 26th August 2019.

The Bridge over the River Kwai, Sam Speigal, (1957).

²⁰ Richard Condon, *The Manchurian Candidate*, (New York, 1959); *The Manchurian Candidate*, John Frankenheimer, (1962).

background setting.²¹ The focus of the movie is far more to do with anti-communist zeal in the Cold War United States than the war itself. As subsequent adaptations set in different conflicts and political intrigues have shown the use of the Korean War in the original is of small consequence.²² That is not to say that the subsequent anti-communist narratives of the Korean War have not had an impact on the personal views of British veterans. As the scale of the Cold War can be retroactively appreciated by veterans, many began to shape their view of the war as a part of that wider struggle. Raymond Todd, who was coincidentally a part of the same unit as Condrón, was one such example who retrospectively adopted his view of his service as that of a Cold War warrior:

I was delighted to have been able to have done my part. I believe it was the first occasion where the communist expansion was actually stopped. Admittedly we were not able to take back the whole of Korea, but that was because of the Chinese intervention.²³

Todd frames his memories of Korea into a fitting much more to do with the wider Cold War than just the Korean War conflict itself. His framing of his service as having done his part is also reminiscent of the manner in which First and Second World War veterans speak of their roles in the earlier conflicts. Similarly, Colonel Jeffes also came to this view in the years following the war, believing that Korea became an early bulwark against later communist aggression:

I think we had to stand up against the Communists, because if we hadn't stood up in Korea, I think it very possible that the East Germans would've attacked the West Germans. It would've spread to Europe, if they got away with it in the Far East. And Stalin was involved, I gather, much more than we thought at the time, he gave Kim Il Sung the go-ahead.²⁴

²¹ Andrew Condrón, 41 Independent Commando, Royal Marines, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 2/1/1987, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 9693), Reel 5 & 6.

²² *The Manchurian Candidate* Jonathan Demme, (2004).

²³ Cpl. Raymond Todd, 41 Independent Commando, Royal Marines, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 16/5/1996, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 16656), Reel 3.

²⁴ Col. H. R. Jeffes, HQ 27th Commonwealth Infantry Brigade, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 1/7/2007, Peter Hart, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 17155), Reel 3.

Again, like Todd, for Jeffes the Cold War perspective of how Korea came to be represented enabled him to claim a part of a larger struggle in the same way as better commemorated, past generations of soldiers. Jeffes came to view his role in Korea as a part of stopping a wider communist threat to the entire world by standing up to them. However, the subsequent adoption of an anti-communist narrative of Korea is not universal. Many veterans refute the idea that the Korean War was a specifically anti-communist war and many soldiers simply did not care about the subsequent politics of the conflict.²⁵ Lieutenant Richard Skinner, for example, held a more pragmatic view of the situation than a politically motivated struggle: 'It wasn't an anti-communist war, it was just against the enemy, against China'.²⁶ Clearly, the acceptance of Cold War narratives is not universally accepted amongst Korea veterans and although it enable some veterans to claim a place in a wider better remembered struggle, evidently, there is still a disparity in experience and representation.

Entanglement with Vietnam in Popular Culture and Remembrance

Remembrance and forgetting were not processes which occurred solely in Britain and the international aspect of the Korean War played heavily into this. In the United States like Britain, the Korean War is markedly less well remembered than the Second World War and the later conflict in Vietnam. Similarly, American popular culture, has spent much less coverage on Korea than the aforementioned wars. This is revealing of how important representation in popular culture is for events in popular memory and across society. Notable representations of the conflict where they exist are also problematic. Where the Korean War is prominent

²⁵ Col. Guy Temple, 1 Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 05/07/1995, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 15557), Reel 1.

²⁶ Lt. Richard Skinner, R Squadron, 8th Battalion, Royal Irish Hussars, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 18/09/2000, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 20606), Reel 2.

in American popular culture it is often used as a foil, prelude or metaphor for the later Vietnam War. For example, In the 1972 novel *First Blood*, sympathetic antagonist Chief Wilfred Teasle's Korean War service is primarily used to give a stark juxtaposition to the rogue Vietnam veteran John Rambo. This was an element entirely left out of the later movie adaptation.²⁷ Also notably is the 1969 movie *M*A*S*H*, *this movie* covers the escapades of a United States Mobile Army Surgical Hospital throughout the Korean War and subsequent long running television series which followed.²⁸ *M*A*S*H* is problematic as a remembrance of Korea for many reasons, primarily as it portrays a highly fictionalised version of the conflict by extending it for several years. It depicts it as having taken place amongst jungle settings not found in Korea. It is also widely regarded as a thinly veiled critique of America's role in Vietnam, rather than a true representation of Korea. In short, the Korean War in the United States, just as in Britain, became hugely under-represented and muddled in popular culture. The reasons for this are as varied and complicated as the reasons for forgetting the Korean War in Britain. However, there are some elements which become significant for the experience of the individual soldier. One of the major driving factors cited as being behind this absence in United States popular culture is the undistinguished combat record of the United States Army in Korea, especially in comparison to its comparatively successful record during the Second World War.²⁹ On two occasions in Korea, the United States led forces were on the brink of total rout and the conflict lacked a meaningful resolution or victory for the USA or for Britain. This view further entangled Korean remembrance with opinions of Vietnam, as seen in *First Blood*

²⁷ David Morrell, *First Blood*, (1972); *First Blood*, B. Feitshans, (1982).

²⁸ *M*A*S*H*, R. Altman, (1969); *M*A*S*H* (1972-1983), Twentieth Century Fox, (1972-1983).

²⁹ C. S Young, 'P.O. Ws: The Hidden Reason for Forgetting Korea', in S. Casey, (ed.), *The Korean War at Sixty: New approaches to the Study of The Korean War*, (Abingdon, 2012), PP. 155- 170.

and *M*A*S*H*. This process was not solely a matter of broad cultural histories regarding Korea. The very trend can also be traced in British Soldiers' subsequent experience of remembering their time in Korea. Captain Charles Chester of the Northumberland Fusiliers, who served in both the Second World War and Korean War interpreted the situation in just this way and was highly resentful of the Americans in his memories as a result:

I hadn't realised yet just how much the Americans ran the whole show that came later. The whole thing was a shambles. I feel very critical of the Americans at that time. It wasn't the fault of the individual American, they're as good as anybody, but it's the way their army was put together, the way they organised themselves. They were fighting a war which should have been fought on their feet, same as Vietnam. If they'd fought on foot like us, they'd have done a damn side better. In Korea and Vietnam, they should have been up on the mountaintops, where the enemy actually were, not driving along the plains.³⁰

Chester's glib memory of the war is rooted in his criticism of how the American troops fought tactically. He very specifically differentiates between his disapproval of American tactics and the role of individual United States troops. He labels the entire war shameless on account of the Americans approach to battle. His implications are that because the United States Army wasn't fighting on its feet as he believed British troops were, the war itself would have gone more successfully. His critique of poor American tactics ties into C. Young's arguments as to why Americans have difficulty in remembering Korea. The similarities between Chester's account and the United States popular cultural references of Korea do not end there. Just as became the case in post- Vietnam representations of Korea, Chester equates his own memories of Korea with what he believes happened in Vietnam. Just as United States media began to entangle memories of Korea to the war in Vietnam, Chester also applied his own views of United States forces in

³⁰ Capt. Charles Chester, 1st Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, Lindsay Barker, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 21030), Reels 7 & 8.

Korea to the later war. What we are seeing evidenced in the experience of British veterans is the sheer impact of global popular culture on their own memories. Chester linked his own memories and recollections of how the Korean War was fought to how the Vietnam War is represented to have been fought nearly twenty years later. Thusly demonstrating the extent to which subsequent portrayals of international media have impacted the experience of remembering for British Soldiers.

Issues Reintegrating into Civilian Life

Of course, the wider phenomena behind the forgetting of the Korean War is not relegated to matters of popular culture. For the veterans who fought in Korea, being forgotten was a process they experienced first-hand, revealing just how numb society in 1950s Britain had become to the plight of returning soldiers. Just like the soldiers of the century's previous conflicts, those servicemen not wishing to remain in the Armed Forces now faced the task of reintegrating back into civilian life. As it had been previously, this was no small feat and for some it proved much more difficult than others. In the cases of the First and Second World Wars, the experience of soldiers' attempts to re-enter civilian society have been well accounted for and form an important part of the conflicts' respective narratives. Once again, the same cannot be said of the soldiers who returned from Korea. The experience of re-integrating to civilian life after having served in Korea shares many similarities with what had occurred following the First and Second World Wars. Men not only had to re-join the civilian workforce, but also had to re-integrate with their families, friends and a wider society which had grown accustomed to returning soldiers. This was the frontline of forgetting Korea. The experience of men in these circumstances was like the war itself, viewed with apathy and disinterest. Society had little time for returning soldiers, especially where they

experienced issues re-adapting to civilian life. Of course, the majority of soldiers who did leave the army following their return from Korea were indeed able to re-integrate without too many problems. An example of this was Bill Crook who had helped rescue Bill Speakman when he won his Victoria Cross. Bill returned from Korea having himself been wounded fighting at the Battle of the Hook in 1953. Despite his injuries, Crook found it quite easy to resume civilian life and was recorded as saying:

It wasn't too bad, I got home to England to be demobbed. I didn't have any trouble getting back into civilian life really. I went back to the taxi garage where I'd worked before and went straight back to it. I had to go to the hospital a few times to have my arm checked but that was all, it didn't give me much trouble. Mentally being wounded didn't really affect me either, I suppose I was just glad to get home.³¹

Crook was amongst the fortunate number of soldiers who were able to return straight into a line of work and life, in his case to the same garage where he had worked prior to his National Service. The ability to step straight back into work seems to have eased the transition for Crook, who aside from minor troubles with his wound, was mainly unaffected by his experience and was certainly happy to be home. Some troops suffered only minor anxieties upon returning. One of those who suffered minor anxieties was Marine John Underwood who found any food made with rice made him feel sick, even though it was very different from what he had in Korea.³² Although cases such as these form the majority of the experience of men returning home, they remain the lucky ones. A significant number found the transition from soldier to civilian to be jarringly difficult. There are various reasons and common themes throughout the experiences of those who found it difficult to

³¹ Pte. Bill Crook, A coy, 1st Battalion, Royal Norfolk Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 1/9/2007, Peter Hart, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 30409), Reel 2.

³² M. John Underwood, 41 Commando, Royal Marines, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 20/1/1994, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 13711), Reel 2.

re-adjust to civilian life. It has been noted in men returning from the First World War that particularly those who were suffering from battle stress, the point of mental breakdown could be at the point where they finally felt liberated. They felt that having left the army's social structure there was no need to withhold weakness.³³ Social anxieties, drinking problems, difficulty in holding down a job and a general difficulty in accepting they no longer had a military structure around them were all compounded by a lack of adequate support for ex-servicemen in the post-war era.

Nightmares

One of the most common forms of difficulty faced by Korea veterans upon their return to the United Kingdom was the re-occurrence of nightmares and night terrors. Nightmares and similar neurosis have been common in many military groups following the dawn of industrialised war and are still prevalent in the post-service experience of British Forces to this day.³⁴ William Clark of the Gloucester Regiment who had been captured at the Battle of Imjin experienced continual re-occurring nightmares that were typical of anxiety attacks of many veterans. In his case, Clark believed Chinese soldiers were still coming to get him and was reported as saying: 'I still have dreams now at times and nightmares, about the imprisonment mainly. I used to dream that Chinese would come in, pick me up and say 'you've got to come back''.³⁵ For the most part, ex-soldiers suffering nightmares were able to recover with time, however, in a society still recovering

³³ M. Roper, *The Secret Battle, Emotional Survival in the First World War*, (Manchester, 2009), PP. 302- 303; Peter Barham, *Forgotten Lunatics of the Great War*, (New Haven, 2004), PP. 221- 222.

³⁴ E. Leed, *No man's land, Combat and Identity in World War One*, (Cambridge, 1979), PP. 164- 167; 'Helmand: Army Survivors Describe Their Legacy of Trauma', *BBC News*, [<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-49300430/helmand-army-survivors-describe-their-legacy-of-trauma>], last accessed 28th August 2019.

³⁵ Pte. William Clark, 1st Battalion, Gloucester Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 19/08/1998, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 18459) Reel 2.

from the after effects of the Second World War, some veterans of Korea could often find little sympathy for their own plights. Leslie Winspear, despite stating 'that serving in Korea had given him a wonderful sense of perspective in life', nonetheless experienced terrible night terrors for years after returning home:

I had nightmares for a few years afterwards. It was a response mechanism that we were under attack and I had to get into action quickly, brief but violent. When I came out of the Army for example, I eventually found digs in Rotherham, with a couple. The husband had been a Bevin Boy in the (Second World) War and I was eventually asked to leave because he and also his wife said they heard me crying out in my sleep. I used to have these nightmares infrequently but they eventually became less and less over the next few years.³⁶

Winspear was not the only veteran to suffer nightmares once back in his home country, however his case is a particularly poignant one as it demonstrates how deeply such a seemingly common thing could affect the life of a returned veteran. The description of his nightmares seems to be a typical case of chronic traumatic nightmares experienced by combat veterans and the symptoms began to cause him problems in his everyday life.³⁷ His shouting as a response to the extremely intense anxiety created by his terrors caused him to lose his lodgings as he was upsetting his host family. It is not explicit why precisely the family were so unsympathetic to Winspear's crying out. Certainly, there would be an element to which it would simply have been disturbing to hear a man crying out at night, however there is also the possibility that the non-combatant viewed the ex-soldier in a negative light on account of his service. There were noted instances following the First and Second World Wars where veterans were viewed with suspicion and

³⁶ Sgt. Leslie Maynard Winspear, Sniper and Intelligence Section, 1st Battalion, Duke of Wellington's Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 6/2/2001, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 21593), Reel 5.

³⁷ B. Van der Kolk & E. Hartmann, 'Nightmares and trauma: A Comparison of Nightmares After combat With Lifelong Nightmares in Veterans', *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 141:2, (1984), PP. 187-190.

in some cases open hostility on account of their involvement in the act of killing.³⁸ It is entirely possible, especially given Winspear's need to include the fact in his recount, that the man who had served in wartime as a non-combatant, was all the more uncomfortable housing a serviceman who had evidently participated in violence. Winspear's nightmares were a point of military action confronting the very centre of the family's civilian world. Therefore, it would seem that the family rejected Winspear similarly to how in the Inter- World War period there was often unwillingness for civilians to share and explore the experience of combat veterans.³⁹ We can see from this at least one aspect of how even seemingly minor and common psychological hang overs as nightmares from serving on the front line could have a profound effect on a veteran's ability to re-integrate into society. Fortunately for Winspear, he eventually found new accommodation and his nightmares eventually abated, however, psychological issues from serving could create much more complex social problems for other Korean War veterans.

Social Isolation

Almost as prevalent as nightmares and much more difficult to adjust, was the common reoccurrence amongst Korea veterans of social isolation and a perceived loneliness. This is borne out by initially having been removed from their friends and families for so long during service and then secondly being removed from their military friends at de-mobilisation. Many ex-servicemen found civilian life to be socially isolated and lonely. Ben Whitchurch described the difficulty of civilian life in similar terms:

I couldn't settle, it took a long time. I'd say years to really come back into it, the world of living again. It was a vacuum of emptiness, not being in the

³⁸ J. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing, Face to Face with Killing in the Twentieth Century*, (London, 1999), PP. 338- 339; A. Bonardo, *Mark of the Beast, Death and Degradation in the Literature of the Great War*, (Lexington, 1989), P. 2; T. Benedek, *Insight and Personality Adjustment, A Study of the Psychological Effects of War*, (New York, 1946), P. 90.

³⁹ Ibid.

army, not knowing all my friends, I had no friends in Civvy Street, other than family.⁴⁰

For Whitchurch, leaving the army meant abandoning the social structure of friends he had built around himself during his service and this was something he clearly felt he lacked as a civilian. He directly links his feelings of emptiness with not being in the army and not the comradeship of his army friends. The desperation of the situation is evidenced by how he describes his experience without friends as hollow and separate from the real living world. David Green described having similar feelings of emptiness once he returned home:

It was like staring into a bottomless pit of nothingness. Sleep had not been easy for some time and I found that lying in bed each night, in the peaceful surroundings of my own home, the silence was deafening. I longed to throw open the window and shout out 'Wake Up!'.⁴¹

The men's description of their situations as hollow and outside of the living worlds demonstrates how they felt directionless and without purpose outside of the structures of army life. Veterans of Korea were in commonality with the experience of many Second World War veterans, adrift in post-war Britain, who also felt feelings of social disorientation and restlessness having returned to civilian life.⁴² David Green's own brother Eric, a veteran of the Navy during the Second World War was still having problems settling down when David had returned from Korea.⁴³ The feelings of isolation could be made all the worse by how some veteran's interactions with families, relatives and friends was portrayed. Most soldiers found discussing their experiences with loved ones difficult, however, there were circumstances in which the conversation was much more distressing, which could push veterans into further isolation from their immediate social group. Whitchurch had this problem because throughout the conflict of the Korean War,

⁴⁰ L/ Cpl. Benjamin Whitchurch, (IWM 26098), Reel 6.

⁴¹ D. Green, *Captured at the Imjin*, P. 179.

⁴² M. Francis, *The Flyer*, P. 182.

⁴³ D. Green, P. 179.

burial and commemoration of the dead proved difficult for British and Commonwealth forces. The reason for this was because during the course of the war, the United States Army was primarily in charge of logistics that included the handling of deceased British Soldiers. The burial of deceased British Soldiers was the responsibility of the United States Grave Units rather than by their British counterparts.⁴⁴ As a result of the burial policies in place, the majority of British war dead were interred at the United Nations Memorial Cemetery at Tanggok in Korea and were never re-patriated to the United Kingdom.⁴⁵ This proved to be a difficult issue for families of the deceased in Britain, who, having often received only the scantest news of a loved one's death felt they lacked satisfactory closure. As was the case following many conflicts, some bereaved families would seek any source they could in order to better take ownership the memory of their loved ones.⁴⁶ Several encounters of this sort proved to be highly distressing for Whitchurch, who was questioned by the families of his friends after his return:

People were asking, wanting to know and it just wasn't something you wanted to talk about, but people still wanted to know. I walked into my Uncle's pub, shortly after coming home and Andy Maurice's mother was in there, with her husband. She almost broke my ribs and eventually she said 'how did my boy die?' and I said 'I'm sorry I don't know, I don't know'... Again, with a family from up the top of the road, Ginger Bishop's mother, wanted to know how their son was killed, I said 'I'm sorry Mrs. Bishop, I don't know'... Friendly fire killed him. But you can't tell people that. It was horrible I couldn't talk to them after that. Same with Harvey, when he brought the men out, Americans thought they were Chinese. Unbelievable.⁴⁷

Whitchurch's case is an extreme one, but it demonstrates how in the news vacuum about Korea in the United Kingdom, veterans could be forced to confront their experience in terribly difficult positions as the bearers of bad news. It is

⁴⁴ TNA, WO 281/2, General Routine Orders, 19. Regarding Graves and Burials.

⁴⁵ Ibid; *Forgotten War, Abandoned Soldiers*, *Seoul Governmental Society Conference Proceedings*, 13/07/2017.

⁴⁶ J. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male, Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, (London, 1996), P. 211.

⁴⁷ Pte. Bill Crook, (IWM 30409), Reel 2.

obvious Whitchurch was placed in an uneasy position by the situation, he did not wish to discuss his experience. Whitchurch was time and time again confronted by families and friends of the deceased wanting to be informed of what had happened. Given the obscure view of the Korean War in the United Kingdom and the lack of detailed news about the situation, Whitchurch became the focal point for news about his fallen comrades, despite him not wishing to discuss the war. Even with the tenderness of his meeting with Maurice's parents, the emotional impact of having to discuss their son's death was clearly difficult for Whitchurch. Similarly, having to lie to the Bishop family about the fate of their son proved to be a struggle and eventually drove Whitchurch to break off contact with them. Such difficulties are just one example of how a Korean veteran's post-war experience could lead to further strained social relationships.

Alcoholism as a Coping Mechanism

All of these various social issues could in turn lead to another common problem for ex-servicemen which are alcohol dependency. Alcohol has always been an easy vice for soldiers under stress to turn too. Alcohol abuse as a form of post-war stress relief is by no means unique to veterans of Korea, or other British conflicts that have occurred with veterans of most military forces throughout history.⁴⁸ Within the British Army throughout the course of army life, alcohol had offered a coping mechanism to the strains and difficulties of military service. Naturally, the army has done its utmost to prevent drunkenness in men on active duty, however, when released from duty at all points in their service, men would quickly find an opportunity to drink alcohol as a release.⁴⁹ Emma Newlands had outlined how some new recruits of the Second World War had rapidly turned to drinking alcohol

⁴⁸ J. Schumm & K. Chard, 'Alcohol and Stress in the Military', *National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism*, 34:4, (2011), PP. 1- 4.

⁴⁹ E. Newlands, *Civilians into Soldiers, War, The Body and British Army Recruits, 1939-45*, (Manchester, 2014), P. 75.

in their free time to help absorb the stresses of their new life. It would appear that the same was true of ex-soldiers turned civilians. Once ex-servicemen were completely free of military restrictions and without any wellbeing services to turn to, history informs us that a struggling veteran's solution to their feelings of isolation and inability to find peace, was to turn to alcoholism. In these instances, drinking became almost a kind of self-medication for the stresses ex-servicemen now faced in civilian life. This pattern of using alcohol to cope with stresses in the short term could lead to a dependency and long-term alcohol abuse lasting for months or even years.⁵⁰ Whitchurch was a part of this group and recognised how he had fallen into a pattern of alcohol abuse by saying 'I couldn't cope. I started having drinking binges ... stoned out my eyeballs. There was a street that housed about twelve, thirteen pubs and I'd just go from one to the other, until I couldn't stand. That went on for quite a long time, months'.⁵¹ Similarly, Green described how drinking quickly became his only way to relax: 'The only relief from the stress I could find was to tour the local pubs, which really only made things worse. I just couldn't handle my beers'.⁵² In the case of both Green and Whitchurch and doubtless many others, their use of alcohol started as a way to manage their new found stresses. This escalated into major drinking problems as a result in a typically recognisable pattern symptomatic of men suffering from untreated Post Trauma Stress Disorder.⁵³ The immediate emotional impact of difficulties such as these in re-integrating was felt foremost between families and loved ones. Again, this was not unique to the veterans of Korea. Michael Roper described how the

⁵⁰ L. Jacobsen, S. Southwick & T. Kosten, 'Substance Use Disorders in Patients with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A Review of the Literature'. *American Journal of Psychiatry* 158:8 (2001), PP. 1184–1190.

⁵¹ L/ Cpl. Benjamin Whitchurch, (IWM 26098), Reel 6

⁵² D. Green, P. 179.

⁵³ J. Bremner, et al, 'Chronic PTSD in Vietnam combat veterans: Course of Illness and Substance Abuse', *American Journal of Psychiatry* 153:3, (1996), PP. 369–375.

same impacts were felt by families of men returning home from the First World War.⁵⁴ Without any proper social or medical care it was up to loved ones to support battle stressed veterans as best they could. For Whitchurch, his problems readjusting and the dependency on alcohol they caused lead to a very emotional confrontation with his mother:

I stopped the drinking over about six months. Mum had an influence in it, because I used to come home, stoned to my eyeballs, in as much that my first Christmas home, I didn't come home. Eventually when I came home on Christmas morning, she stood in the doorway, breaking her heart, she said 'I went in your bedroom with all your presents and you weren't in bed'. I'd been so drunk the night before; I couldn't get home... That stopped me then.⁵⁵

Whitchurch's case is just one example of the need for external influence to come out of his post-war haze, however he was most certainly not alone.

Lack of Veterans care

In the years following their return from the Korean War, British veterans found themselves in what should have been a much better environment for healthcare and wellbeing than had existed after the Second World War in 1945. There had been a significant interest in mental healthcare throughout the inter World War period and the National Health Service had become well established by 1953. Following the Second World War and the lessons learned about military and civilian health, greater emphasis was being placed upon recognising the importance of mental health. However, the British Army itself lacked any real capabilities to deal with mental wellbeing and the National Health Service in the early 1950s failed to provide any real emphasis in this direction. It was not until the reforms ushered in by the Mental Health Act of 1959 that mental health became a

⁵⁴ Roper, PP. 285.

⁵⁵ L/ Cpl. Benjamin Whitchurch, (IWM 26098), Reel 6.

major concern of national infrastructure.⁵⁶ The result of this was that for men returning from active service in Korea they had to wait at least six years before any meaningful professional support structure was in place for them. As such, veterans were forced to rely upon the support of family and friends where ever possible. This was in an environment of disinterest in their experience and a time when great stigma was still attached to mental health issues, if indeed they were recognised at all. Edwin Haywood, a veteran of the Middlesex Regiment, who had himself witnessed his unit's chaplain suffer a mental breakdown in Korea, began to exhibit signs of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and depression in himself shortly after being demobilised:

My problems started, the nightmares, which I experienced, started about six months after my demob. I don't know what triggered them. I went from about thirteen stone, down to about nine, through terrific perspiration from these nightmares, lack of sleep, lack of energy, poor outlook generally on life. And it really does pull you down. This continued for probably two years or more, but there was no counselling in those days, just a few pills from your doctor and you just had to work your way through it, which I did... it was a very traumatic experience.⁵⁷

Haywood's description of his nightmares and general post-war experience match closely the more severe types of anxiety disorders and depression that are commonly associated with Post Trauma Stress Disorder. Like Winspear and many others he suffered from terrible nightmares, however the flashbacks, insomnia and depression were all more severe and major symptoms of the disorder. Ideally, men in these positions required a complex support structure in order for the condition to improve. However, we can see from Haywood's testimony that such a support structure did not exist and besides the prescription from his doctor of pills,

⁵⁶ 'Mental Health', *People's History of the NHS*, [<https://peopleshistorynhs.org/encyclopaedia/mental-health/>], last accessed, 20th August 2019.

⁵⁷ Pte. Edwin Haywood, 1st Battalion, Middlesex Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 31/03/2000, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 20268) Reel 4.

he lacked anything that would be considered adequate help today. Haywood's experience of Post Trauma Stress Disorder lasted for many years after his demobilisation and his having to face it alone as he describes was a traumatic experience in itself. Others, like Whitchurch, were able to face the psychological impact of their service with the help of their families, however even in these circumstances, the experience could be tremendously difficult and painful. Veteran of commando operations and former prisoner of war John Peskett suffered terribly from anxiety issues after returning from Korea and found that the only support he could get was between his wife and a sympathetic officer:

I had to get over it on my own... correction, I got over it with the help of my wife. I had got to the stage where I would not go out during the day, I couldn't go shopping with her, only in the darkness. I had a drinking problem. I tried going back to the marines, I hadn't washed or shaved, I was a scruffy devil. An officer just said he wanted to talk with me and I cried coming away from that meeting for about twenty minutes. He just said to dig in and let it all out. They gave me time and that's what I needed, time. A few months later I had re-joined and had Sergeant stripes on my shoulders.⁵⁸

Haywood, Clark and Peskett all exhibit the most common mental health disorders found in British forces after returning from deployment are depression, alcohol abuse and anxiety disorders.⁵⁹ Although he is quick to credit his wife in helping him through his post-war anxiety, Peskett's first thought on the matter shows he very clearly felt elements of being alone in his experience. Again, like Haywood and Clark, Peskett's symptoms indicate a case of Post Trauma Stress Disorder, which severely affected his abilities to function as a civilian in society at home. Even with the support his wife was able to offer him, it would seem he still could not open up to her fully in the same way he describes with the Marine officer. His return to the Royal Marines would indicate that Peskett felt unable to resolve his

⁵⁸ Sgt. John Peskett, 45 Commando, Royal Marines, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 5/3/1994, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 14025), Reel 4.

⁵⁹ A. Iverson & N. Greenberg, 'Mental Health of Regular and Reserve Military Veterans', *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, 15:10, (2009), PP. 100- 106.

issues in civilian life and it is possible he felt that only other marines could understand his situation. It seems he was very glad to have an emotional outlet in a military setting as evidenced by how he felt able to openly cry in front of the officer. The very act of being given the time from a fellow serviceman seems to have greatly helped Peskett as he was able to improve his outlook and eventually rise to the rank of a Sergeant. Evidently, the importance of a military structure and having fellow servicemen who could understand is a key part of the post-war experience. This goes some way to outlining the wider importance of veterans' associations and organisations in the post-war veteran's experience.

Veterans' Organisations in the Post-War Experience

Veterans' organisations form a special bond in the post-war experience of the men who fought in Korea. The Royal British Legion and other similar regimental associations such as The British Korean Veterans Association (BKVA) and its successor, the British Korean War Veterans Association (BKWVA) assisted. These organisations exist to help structure a support network around veterans to assist in commemoration of the war. So much is stated in the still live introductory page of the BKVA's official website.⁶⁰ Though the BKVA officially disbanded in 2014 with the ideal of 'going out with heads held high', its role in the lives of veterans over the previous thirty years was hugely important, as its successors continue to do so.⁶¹ William Crook reflected on how the BKVA helped reconnect him with his old comrades for decades: 'I joined the (British) Korean Veterans Association about twenty odd years ago now. I get the regular newsletters and it is good hearing about everybody and how they're getting on'.⁶² For William Clark,

⁶⁰ 'About the BKVA', *The British Korean Veterans Association*, [<http://www.bkva.co.uk/membership.htm>], last accessed, 20th August 2019.

⁶¹ 'The Future of the BKVA/ Closure', *The British Korean Veterans Association*, [<http://www.bkva.co.uk/closure.htm>], last accessed, 20th August 2019.

⁶² Pte. Bill Crook, (IWM 30409) Reel 2.

being a member of a veterans association allowed him to explore many more benefits of being a veteran. 'I'm making the most of it. I was invited to Buckingham Palace and the United Nations' 50th Anniversary, I've re-visited Korea. I was invited to the amalgamation of the Gloucester regiment'.⁶³ Alongside supporting veterans, the role of veterans associations in the field of commemoration such as in Clark's example, is also particularly important for veterans, given the adverse feelings of Korea being a forgotten conflict.

One particular element to the role of Korean War veterans associations, is the extent to which they have as a community accepted the forgotten nature of the Korean War as a strong part of their sense of identity. Huxford argues that the forgotten status of the war did in fact, give it a special and significant status amongst the veteran's community.⁶⁴ Throughout the various ranks of Korean veterans, the concept of being 'forgotten' is a prominent part of how they articulate their post-war identity. This is borne out by General Sir Anthony Farrar Hockley a notable Korea veteran and military historian who summarised the Korean veteran's community at an address in 2000. He described it as 'veterans who may have been overlooked, but were none the less part of an exclusive club'.⁶⁵ Whitchurch reflected on how Korean veterans viewed themselves as forgotten, yet remained a closely-knit group:

We're always called the forgotten army, but the comrades that I've got now, you couldn't buy that. In fact, we keep saying the comradeship and the comradery, even now, we'd do anything for each other.⁶⁶

For Whitchurch, being a part of the forgotten army was a proud part of his identity, in resistance to the prevailing narrative of apathy and lack of remembrance to

⁶³ Pte. William Clark, (IWM 18459) Reel 2.

⁶⁴ G. Huxford, *The Korean War in Britain*, PP. 167- 173.

⁶⁵ Dedication of British Korean Veterans Association Memorial, (National Army Museum, 2000-11-41, 27/6/2000).

⁶⁶ L/ Cpl. Benjamin Whitchurch, (IWM 26098), Reel 6.

Korea. The closeness of his comrades and their level of commitment to each other in spite of society's perceived lack of interest in them, are typical of the somewhat unique self-memorialisation of Korean veterans' communities.⁶⁷ This is to the extent that since the 1980s, with help from each other and the BKVA, Korean veterans were able to create their own distinct body of literature. This they dedicated either to their individual experiences of the war as 'extra chapters in the history books' or as a general addendum to mainstream histories of Korea.⁶⁸ The reasons behind the effort made to generate this body of work were summarised by veteran Ted Stokes in his own memoir in the BKVA's newsletter, *Morning Calm* as: 'We all have moments in history that at the time were just events and only later blossomed into significant experiences'.⁶⁹ It is evident that to veterans of the Korean War, associations clearly play a hugely important part in their post-war experience, both as a support structure and as a mechanism of directly memorialising the Korean War. The BKVA and similar organisations played a huge role in physical commemorations and remembrance for Korea. A part of this was the funding and organisation of smaller scale physical memorials across Britain. From the late 1980s, the BKVA has helped in the installation of various memorials that include the planting of memorial fir trees and accompaniments to older cenotaphs. Other mementoes are memorial plaques in the National Arboretum, the crypt of St. Paul's Cathedral and a larger memorial in the Bathgate Hills in Scotland, in the style of a Korean Pagoda.⁷⁰ In 2014 with substantial funding from the Republic of Korea the BKVA was able to achieve its 'final fight' of recognition

⁶⁷ G. Huxford, P. 168.

⁶⁸ Ibid, P. 169; E. J. McNair, *A British Army Nurse in the Korean War: Shadows of the Far Forgotten*, (Stroud, 2007).

⁶⁹ T. Stokes, 'Batsman 1951- 1954: The Memoirs of a Squaddie', *Morning Calm* 65, (2001), P. 4.

⁷⁰ 'May They Live in Our Memories', *Evening Star* (Ipswich), 28th February, 2011; 'Korean War Memorial in Bathgate too Difficult to Find', *Scotsman*, 27th April, 2016.

of those who gave their lives in Korea. This was in the establishment of the Korean War Memorial at London's Victoria Embankment.⁷¹ The cooperation between veterans associations and the South Korean Government was not only limited to funding and is another major part in the various organisations efforts to self-commemorate the Korean War. The role of both veteran's organisations and the Republic of Korea has been especially prominent in international commemorations of the Korean War. Many veterans reflect positively upon the gratitude shown by the Korean Government, in particular their emphasis on anniversaries. Roy Horn, described his views on the Republic of Korea's efforts to commemorate the 2010 anniversary in a letter to the *Morning Calm*, following his own experience of the event: 'The Koreans are treating 2010 as a key war anniversary, whilst the British Government is not'.⁷² Clearly, the difference of perceived levels of commemoration and remembrance in the United Kingdom and in the Republic of Korea has been keenly observed by veterans over the years. This leads into another major part of the role veterans associations and the part that the Republic of Korea contributes in the post-war experience. Their joint experience is shown in their joint emphasis on helping veterans to return to Korea itself.

Importance of Revisiting to Remembrance

One of the most profound experiences in the post-war experience of British troops who fought in Korea is the subsequent return of many of them to South Korea. Although veterans revisiting the sites of past conflicts is not a unique feature of the Korean Post-war history, there is an element to which it is significantly different. Contrary to the narrative of forgetting prevalent in the United Kingdom, the Korean War remains prominent and important in South Korean society. As one may

⁷¹ 'The Future of the BKVA/ Closure', *The British Korean Veterans Association*, [<http://www.bkva.co.uk/closure.htm>], last accessed, 20th August 2019.

⁷² Roy Horn, 'Korea Revisit, April 2010', *Morning Calm*, 61 (2010), P. 10

expect, commemoration of the war is much more prominent in general throughout South Korea than it is in the United Kingdom. This is quite understandable, as the war is much more significant to the Korean People than it is to British Society. This is shown by efforts to commemorate the war by funding war memorials in Britain, including the Korean War Memorial at London Embankment as well as routinely sending thank you cards to British veterans.⁷³ Physical examples of this in Korea itself include the War Memorial of Korea in Seoul, which is home to a permanent and large exhibit dedicated entirely to United Nations forces. The exhibition consists of six separate zones showcasing images of United Nations troops that include those from the British contingent. Amongst the exhibits are the United Nations Flag and a large art piece called *Tear Drops* to commemorate the United Nations soldiers who died heroic, noble deaths.⁷⁴ Additionally, United Nations troops who died during the Korean War are given inscriptions in the National Memorial Hall. Similarly, the United Nations Memorial Cemetery in Busan is described as the only United Nations cemetery in the world. This is a highly significant memorial site to South Korea because it prominently features the graves of Major Kenneth Muir (Victoria Cross) and Lieutenant Philip Curtis (Victoria Cross), who died fighting at the Battle of Hill 282 and the Battle of the Imjin respectively.⁷⁵

It is therefore not surprising that allowing veterans to revisit Korea has also a symbolic act of remembrance for the soldiers, their families and the wider veterans' associations. These visits are with the Korean government officially promoting and encouraging such visits. William Clark for example listed re-visiting

⁷³ 'The Last British Veterans of Korea: The Forgotten War', *The Telegraph*, 31st October, 2018.

⁷⁴ 'The War Memorial of Korea: The UN Room', *The War Memorial of Korea*, [<https://www.warmemo.or.kr/LNG/exhibition/exhibit.do>], last accessed 9th August, 2019.

⁷⁵ 'Ban, Ki-Moon's Remarks at UN Memorial Cemetery in Korea [As delivered]', *Ban Ki-Moon's Speeches*, *UN News Centre*, 30th November, 2011.

Korea as one of the highlights of veteran's activities he had taken part in.⁷⁶

Kenneth Black felt his view of the war improved vastly because of his return to Korea:

I've been back three times and it's changed for the better. I feel better now than I did then for it. Because we were given no choice in it, we didn't know what it was about. In fact, we didn't even know where the damn country was. When you go back and see it now, the way that it's grown up in the last few years, their healthy economy, it's brilliant, it was all well worth it.⁷⁷

We can see from Black's experience that the very act of re-visiting itself can prove to be a hugely significant emotional experience that forms a key element in their own personal remembering of the War. Black's impression of how South Korea has 'improved' since his time of serving there, was certainly a major element in believing that the war had become worthwhile. Similarly, James Lucock had his views on the conflict totally changed by his experience of re-visiting South Korea after the war:

I always thought that the war had been a terrible waste of time, a terrible place to have been, but having been back to South Korea, I now feel differently about it all. I've seen a country with children well fed, people well educated, well dressed and they were most humble to me, always wanting to shake your hand. They were so generous, it's really nice. If that's made them people in South Korea happy, then I accept that my time there was worthwhile.⁷⁸

Lucock's recollection is reflective of many trends in the experience of British veterans on their return to Korea. Like Black, his return to Korea kindled a feeling that the efforts of himself and Britain in Korea had not been a waste of time, but rather had been a worthwhile endeavour. This is a wide spread opinion, as many other veterans have expressed similar views following their own re-visits.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Pte. William Clark, (IWM 18459) Reel 2.

⁷⁷ Tpr. Kenneth Black, 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 05/12/1998, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, catalogue number 18022) Reel 5.

⁷⁸ James Lucock, in S. Kelly, P. 200.

⁷⁹ Pte. William Clark, (IWM 18459) Reel 2; Sgt. Henry Taylor, (National Army Museum, Oral History Recording, Unknown Interviewer, 14/4/1989, 8905-167-1).

Henry Ponsford, who had served with the Gloucesters during the war, also reflected how the attitudes of the Korean people towards United Nations veterans helped him feel positively about his own service. Ponsford, who had initially stated 'Thank God I ain't out there', when he first heard news of Korea he went on to say the following having visited the place since: 'I feel it was a good job done for the people out there. They appreciate what we did and they couldn't do enough for us'.⁸⁰ Kenneth Black stated something along the same lines, 'The Korean people, when you go back are so grateful when they find out you're a veteran, they'll come up and shake your hand in the street and give you a little bow'.⁸¹ Similarly, Raymond Todd recounted how he had a very public thanks for his service whilst on holiday in the United States:

If you look at North Korea today, it's just an ant heap and you look at South Korea which is a prosperous, modern, industrial nation. I feel very proud indeed to have had some small part in it. To give you an example, two years ago, we were in San Francisco for a veterans' reunion with George Company (U.S Marine Corps), who we had been on the road with us over there. At the fisherman's market my wife and I were talking to a seller who told us he was Korean and when I mentioned I'd fought there, his face lit up. He took a hold of both my hands and in the middle of this market he said 'I want to thank you, because of what you did, my family are able to do what they do!' If nothing else, that one moment made it worthwhile. The other thing is of course those people who were my comrades during the Korean War, British and American, they are still my very good friends to this day.⁸²

In all instances, the veterans' views of their service in Korea were distinctively shaped by their encounters with Korean people and the way in which they showed appreciation. Ponsford particularly reflected upon how many Korean people he had met went above and beyond his expectations to make him feel appreciated. Whereas Todd was moved by an individual act of gratitude. Todd heavily implies

⁸⁰ Cpl. Henry Ponsford, 1st Battalion, Gloucester Regiment, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 20/08/1998, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 18456) Reel 1 & 2.

⁸¹ Tpr. Kenneth Black, (IWM 18022) Reel 5.

⁸² Cpl. Raymond Todd, (IWM 16656), Reel 3.

that his view of having served in the Korean War is partially shaped by the view he has of North Korea, especially in comparison to its southern counterpart.

Describing North Korea in derogatory terms and drawing a comparison to an ant heap, Todd is not alone in viewing the nation with some disdain.⁸³ Similarly, his contrasted opinion of South Korea the modernised South, is quite widely shared amongst British veterans. William Hiscox quipped of the situation 'The South Koreans are doing much better now, but the North? I don't believe in Father Christmas anymore, but I do believe that North Korea is as poor as it is'.⁸⁴ Clearly an awareness of the general recovery and social improvements in recent decades in South Korea is important to British veteran's experience of life post-war.

However, it is the specific acts of gratitude which seem to resonate most. In Todd's case it was the thanks he received from a Korean in the United States of America which he describes as having the biggest effect on his view of the war. The importance of the moment is demonstrated by how clearly Todd recalls the man's joy and thanks towards him. That and his description that the single act of thanks made the whole endeavour worthwhile shows how important he felt the appreciation to be. On a similar note, Ponsford completely reversed his position on having served in the war based on the way he was treated by South Koreans. It would seem that to an extent that this is due to the different attitudes held towards United Nations veterans in Korea compared with the United Kingdom. Where as many feel their stories are not important in British Society, in Korea, they feel as if they are listened to with greater interest.⁸⁵ To the veterans, the acts of appreciation shown by the Korean people are a kind of active, first hand remembrance which can seem lacking in British Society. Even in cases where

⁸³ Capt. Charles Chester, (IWM 21030), Reel 7; Sgt. John Peskett, (IWM 14025), Reel 2.

⁸⁴ Dvr. William Hiscox, (IWM 28764), Reel 6.

⁸⁵ 'The Last British Veterans of Korea: The Forgotten War', *The Telegraph*, 31st October, 2018.

veterans still retained negative feelings towards having served in the war, subsequent revisits with the BKVA and the attitude of the Korean people could prove to be hugely rewarding experiences. Roy Rees was one such example, who did not change his views, but still found revisiting hugely significant:

I still feel bitter about it, having served. I suppose it destroyed my belief in democracy [...] I've tried to go back to see the hill on the Imjin a number of times but you're not allowed there. I have been back to South Korea several times. We always get a very good reception, very good, they couldn't do enough for you. I actually ended up adopting our girl from Korea, she's at university now.⁸⁶

For Rees, revisiting was a more nuanced matter. He still felt embittered about having fought in the war to the extent that his opinion of democracy itself was shaken, however, he still viewed his revisits to Korea with the BKVA fondly. Though Rees regrets not being able to revisit the site of the Battle of the Imjin which now lies in North Korea, He shares the experience of having a positive reception from the people of Korea on each subsequent visit. This led to him and his wife adopting his daughter from Korea, which is undeniable a significant life experience. Yet for all this benefit, Rees's view on having served in Korea did not change and he remained bitter about the war. This goes to indicate that re-visiting was not always a simple matter, but could be more nuanced in the range of a veteran's post-war experience. Though it was almost universally felt to be a positive act of both commemoration and appreciation, it could often change a soldier's view of the war, some men kept their own personal and complex views on having served.

Conclusion

The post-war experience of the Korean War is a microcosm of the war itself. In a society which remains to this day uninterested and apathetic, it has been left to the

⁸⁶ Pte. Roy Rees, Z Company, 1st Battalion, Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, (Imperial War Museum interview recording, 26/10/1999, Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number 19854) Reel 2.

veterans and their families to be the bearers of the memory of the Korean War. From the moment of the ceasefire, sounded by a bugler of the Durham Light Infantry shortly after Ten o'clock on July 27th 1953, Korea was already consigned to a watered-down place in British military history.⁸⁷ In a way, the date is oddly reflective of this. Unlike VE- Day, or the famous 11/11 armistice of the First World War, the end of the Korean War was not memorable or celebrated. There was no concise, easily remembered time nor date, just as there was no concise, edifying ending to the war itself. In both time and space, Korea came to be viewed as unremarkable.⁸⁸ This national apathy came to manifest itself in a lack of representation, further driving a lack of remembrance. Unlike the First and Second World Wars, which took place again and again as representations of the conflicts in the cultural canon, Korea 'never really happened' in the national psyche.⁸⁹ Korea became the typical 'forgotten war' in culture and remembrance, as did the veterans become the typical 'forgotten soldiers' underrepresented at every level. The shadow of Vietnam in narratives of late Twentieth Century conflict also obscured Korea as United States popular culture came to dominate. Even as the Cold war progressed, Korea remained culturally insignificant. The war was a backdrop to intrigue or a footnote in fictional veterans' characters. For the individual veteran, these wider cultural phenomena helped frame their experience of the war, yet they continually reinforced their place outside of popular memory. This was a process most veterans went through first-hand. Re-integrating to a society which had seen the return of 4.4 million Second World War veterans in the previous eight years proved to be a difficult and unsung process for many Korea

⁸⁷ Inscription on the DLI Memorial Statue, Durham, UK.

⁸⁸ G. Huxford, P. 158.

⁸⁹ Ibid, P. 164; Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (Bloomington, 1995), PP. 31- 35; Kevin Foster, *Fighting Fictions: War Narrative and National Identity*, (London, 1999), P.150.

veterans.⁹⁰ Ex- servicemen faced all of the same issues as their predecessors, but without the sense of achievement and purpose bestowed on the previous generations of British Soldier. However, Korea veterans also had to share the lack of support in the same way as past soldiers, leaving it up to the individual or immediate social circle to resolve their issues. This is perhaps part of the reason why veterans themselves came to be the primary caretakers of remembrance for their experience. Like their post-war social issues, it was left to the veterans and their families to be the bearers of the memory of the Korean War. Veterans' associations proved to be vital in supporting veterans on an individual level and to reclaiming the memory of Korea overall. Groups such as the BKVA allowed ex-soldiers to come to terms with their service, changing their views from the wide spread apathy, into a proud memory with purpose, like the voices of their predecessors. Veterans were able to revisit their experiences and were shown the appreciation many felt they had lacked in Britain over the years. Veterans were able to adopt the forgotten moniker as a part of their identity and in doing so, became the custodians of their own memory, in a narrative in which they are largely left out of remembrance. Ultimately, the post-war experience was not only shaped by cultural narratives and representative apathy, but by the individual veterans themselves as they defended their memory and ensured that their experiences of the Korean War were never completely forgotten.

⁹⁰ Alan Allport, *Demobbed: Coming Home After the Second World War*, (Yale, 2009), P. 43.

Chapter 7: Conclusion.

Private William 'Bill' Speakman V.C.

In February 1952, the usually calm village of Altringham, Cheshire was enraptured in patriotic celebration. Private William 'Bill' Speakman, a soldier with the King's Own Scottish Borderers Regiment had returned to his home town a war-hero, having earned the first Victoria Cross of Queen Elizabeth's reign. The Mayor of Altringham described both the occasion and the man as 'truly unique' and indeed it was, for Bill Speakman had just become the only member of the British Army to receive a Victoria Cross for action in the Korean War and survive. It had been on the Fourth of the previous November on a freezing Korean winter's night, in a scratch line of trenches designated '217- United Hill' when Speakman and his platoon had stood in a desperate defence against an overwhelming Chinese attack. Despite being wounded, Bill led multiple counter attacks against the enemy, stalling their advance and allowing the Scottish Borderers to withdraw safely. Bill Speakman was at the time the soldier most famous for serving in the Korean War within British society. Though Michael Caine would later go on to earn fame for his acting career, Speakman was famous for his actions on the battlefield.

In many ways, Bill Speakman's experience of the Korean War and the years thereafter was the inverse of the experience of Sir Michael Caine. Speakman had been a career soldier since the Second World War and had volunteered to go to Korea. Whereas Michael Caine, then Maurice Micklewhite, had entered the Korean War as a National Serviceman and was merely sent there with his battalion. Speakman had his moment in the national spotlight during the war, only to be forgotten as time went on. Michael Caine on the other hand was just one of many obscure soldiers at the war's end but went on to fame later. Years later

when Sir Michael Caine, recalled his return home, he spoke of how he felt forgotten and seeing his efforts uncared for by society. He wrote in his memoirs: 'I know what it feels like to be sent off to fight in an unpopular war, that no one at home really understands or cares about and then to come back and meet a complete lack of understanding or worse indifference'.¹ On the face of it, Speakman's return home could not have been more different. The mayor of Altringham as well as a large press gathering met Bill on the tarmac at Manchester Airport. Thousands of people lined the streets to watch a special motorcade convoy through to the town hall, before Bill was presented to the crowd by the Mayor on the balcony of the town hall. Between the crowds, flag waving, bunting and cheers, the scene was more than reminiscent of the V.E day celebrations only a few years earlier. Yet, the creeping sense of national forgetfulness was already clearly present in Speakman's experience. Just as Micklewhite's return was defined by feeling forgotten and uncared for, Bill Speakman's only official quote to the press that day was simply: 'Don't forget the boys in Korea, they're doing a tough job and they're doing it well'.² Maurice Micklewhite left Korea as someone typical of the average British soldier but went on to become someone of exception. Whereas Speakman returned home as the exceptional soldier, to go on to a post military career that was somewhat less glorious. Bill Speakman's eventual return to civilian life was more in line with what many Korea veterans experienced, especially in a post-war society. He found returning to civilian life difficult and struggled with various jobs as well as an arrest for theft, eventually being forced to sell his V.C and other medals to raise money. Bill emigrated and returned to the UK various times, before settling down and becoming a Chelsea Pensioner. He

¹ Michael Caine, *The Elephant to Hollywood, The Autobiography*, (Edinburgh, 2010), P. 54.

² 'Speakman V.C Comes Home'.

remained an active member of the British Korean Veterans Association and representative of the Royal British Legion until his passing in 2018.³ Like Sir Michael, most British troops who served in Korea received no victory parade, no memorialisation and no newsreels. Like Bill Speakman, their experience of the war was forgotten, along with the war itself in British collective memory. Hence, the importance of both men's words on being forgotten. It did not matter the fame any one man had from the conflict; their collective experience was largely ignored. While Caine had the typical war experience, Speakman had the typical post-war experience. However, both highlight key aspects of the experiences of British soldiers of the Korean War.

Through a rigorous analysis of the oral testimonies and life writing from veterans such as Speakman and Sir Michael, this work has shown that the recollected experience of these men not only allows for a reassessment of narratives of the war itself, but it also opens a window into 1950s Britain and society's attitudes the Korean War, both then and since. By creating a piece to restore the soldier's experience to the centre of narratives of the Korean War, this work has also revealed how the experience of these men were shaped by society around them. This work has shown how veterans' recollections of Korea could be shaped and formed in the context of previous conflicts, demonstrating the power held by these events in popular memory, then and now. This further demonstrates how the failure of the Korean War to develop its own narrative tropes in popular memory and to create a lasting impression with wider post-war society led to the trope of Korea being a 'Forgotten War'.

³ 'Bill Speakman, V.C, Obituary', *The Guardian*, 26th June 2018.

The processes and events that have led to this are evident in several key areas of soldiers' experiences of the conflict. These began before the war itself, before men even reached the Korean Peninsula, they had to experience the change from civilian to soldier. Despite any changes to society and politics or even to the motivations behind the army's recruitment and training policies in the 1950s, both new recruits like Micklewhite and experienced soldiers like Speakman had their own agendas and views of being soldiers in post- Second World War Britain. For some new National Servicemen, it was a begrudged interruption to their planned civilian lives, whereas others welcomed the change and opportunities army service represented, showing that there was no blanket reaction to enlistment. Reservists too had mixed views about being returned to active duty following their previous service. This thesis has thereby demonstrated that through these recollections, it is evident that men maintained their own agency and opinions throughout the recruitment process and that individual goals were central to the experience. Here is shown the first indication that the Korean War was not due to enter collective memory, as without a wider societal goal as motivation, the experience of soldiers in training does not fit neatly into either a Cold War narrative or as a continuation of the Second World War. Regardless of how men felt about joining or re-joining the ranks, the methods employed by the army to instigate control over their physical and mental beings were in place from the second they arrived on base and in some cases earlier. It appears that in terms of individual experience, these methods of implementing control over soldiers' minds and bodies were mainly a continuation of what had occurred throughout the Second World War and did not reflect any social or political changes in post-war Britain. It has also been shown how throughout the training process a wide diversity of men from various social backgrounds were suddenly thrown together and how in response to this, soldiers

sought to project their masculinity and dominance, as well as friendship and comradery into their new environment. From this, this study has shown that ideas about self-image in 1950s society found ways to manifest themselves in an environment in which the army sought to create a uniform image. Additionally, the experience of deploying to Korea and the voyage itself, an element so often left out of military histories in general, is also shown to have been a significant part of the experience of all soldiers who were sent to Korea. The voyage itself proved to be a microcosm of army life, with strict elements of army control being applied to men's lives as well as all of the same social tensions that were found in other areas of men's experience. However, men's reactions to being selected or even volunteering for service in Korea challenges the notion that Korea was universally regarded as an unpopular posting and shows that not all men who served in Korea did so reluctantly or without choice. These soldiers had their own agency and formed their own opinions and reactions to their deployment.

This work has also demonstrated the importance of the frontline environment beyond strategic thinking and has recentred it to where it belongs within a soldier's experience. For soldiers on the ground, the environment of Korea was both alien and different whilst at the same time being a reflection of the trenches of the First World War's Western Front. This is how men chose to frame their views of the environment, the similarities were such that Korea's frontlines could fit neatly into troops' popular memories of the First World War. Repeatedly, veterans related their experiences through touchstones and concepts of the Great War. What this demonstrates is that from the point of view of the Poor Bloody Infantry, the physical characteristics of the frontlines, from the mud logged trenches to the activities carried out in them, seemed to be a continuity of the First World War

experience. This is despite the many features of the Korean environment which distinguished it as a unique environment. This clearly demonstrates the dominance of the tropes and imagery of the First World War in the collective memory of the 1950s and in subsequent years. Even areas of the Second World War such as the Far- East Theatre, which may in hindsight be a better fit for the model of the Korean War, had not yet developed a strong enough narrative to influence wider societies perception of frontline environments. This also leads into one of the reasons why the Korean frontline environment never developed its own cultural imagery. Unlike, the World Wars and other conflicts such as Vietnam, there is little in the way of popular cultural depictions of Korea and so there is no common touchstone veterans can use to relate their experiences of the Korean frontlines. For these reasons, the Korean frontline environment has continually existed in the shadow of the trenches of the First World War which in turn becomes a key factor in the process of Korea becoming a 'forgotten war'.

In terms of the British soldier's experience of combat and fighting in Korea, this work has demonstrated that men predominantly viewed their enemies in coldly distant and impersonal terms, unlike the soldiers of the World War's European battlefields. As is clear from soldiers' testimonies, these views were driven by both the conditions in which combat usually occurred as well as racial views of the Chinese and North Koreans. Veterans of fighting in these scenarios were less weighed down by the emotional strain of killing someone they perceived as an individual and were therefore able to discuss their combat experiences more freely. Of course, this was not always the case, as several accounts have shown, men could see past these factors to have very humanised views of their opponents. In these scenarios, British troops were much more likely to develop a far more emotional response to the acts of killing and fighting individuals than

those who had been unable to see their enemy. Evidently, British troops views on killing depended less upon their personal views of the enemy and more upon how the combat took place. It has also been shown that troops on the frontlines were also very aware of the dangers posed to their own selves in combat. Accounts show that some soldiers were overcome by their fears in the face of battle. In other cases, some soldiers used whatever means they could to distract themselves or show a lack of fear. Even more unusual reactions were deliberate nonchalance about the dangers posed to their lives and limb, though these behaviours became less common as casualties occurred within a unit. This work has also taken into account the experience of what combat was like for non- combat troops, who had equally complex reactions to combat as their frontline counterparts. In some accounts, non-combatants found fighting to provide a release and they sought to re- enter battle as soon as possible. Others were more subject to their fear for facing the consequences of battle. In all these cases, a new deeper understanding of fighting has been revealed by the oral testimonies of the soldiers who fought in Korea, which will help to shed light on the wider experience of fighting troops throughout the Twentieth Century.

This work has also demonstrated the importance of soldiers' social lives on the frontlines of Korea and how interconnected soldiers were with society back in the UK. Though the social spheres of soldiers' lives have been considered at length for other conflicts, new military histories have yet to fully address the absence of this vital part of life on the frontlines of Korea. This work has taken to this challenge and has highlighted the importance of these social behaviours for troops in Korea. It has demonstrated how the social lives of the soldiers, their shaped group behaviour, group identity and human bonds, were a highly significant part of day to day life. as well as demonstrating how images of self as deemed by society

at the time influenced men's behaviour in Korea. Soldiers developed an intricate structure of social support amongst their ranks on Korea. This was based around strong interpersonal bonds of friendship and group social support. Individual's testimonies have shown that personal friendships and close groups of mates were a key centre point of all this. Bonds between friends were amongst the most important social mechanisms for dealing with the stresses of life in Korea. Friend groups and mates were as much a part of soldier's lives as their dugouts and daily routines and soldiers ensured that they remained close to their friends whenever possible. By living, eating and sleeping alongside each other, soldiers in Korea were able to provide each other with constant social and emotional care. This ensured that soldiers within these friend groups could keep each other from despairing, make sure they were all fed and were well slept. This work has further highlighted the importance of these social groups by demonstrating the difficulties faced by men who could not integrate into a close social group. These individuals found day to day life in Korea to be much more isolated, lonely and as a result more difficult. In terms of social caring behaviours on the frontlines, this work has shown that social care could be highly paternal as well as brotherly. Accounts show that parenting and 'mothering' behaviours were just as common in Korea as they have been in observations of other conflicts throughout the Twentieth Century. This was particularly common amongst troops in leadership positions who would behave towards their underlings in a similar manner to parents. They scolded poor behaviour, looked out for younger troops and ensured care was distributed. Resultantly, many soldiers viewed their leaders in parental terms and described them similarly to father figures. Although close care was often for the benefit of the whole social group, these social support structures were very beneficial to soldiers on a day to day basis. It has also been shown that these

social groups also provided men with an opportunity to project their self-image as it was defined in societal archetypes, however this was often an unhealthy tendency. English soldiers in primarily Scottish units overemphasised behaviours they identified as belonging to society's definition of 'English' and similarly, soldiers often went out of their way or placed themselves in danger to project an image of 'masculinity'. These projections could be warped and used to cover over how soldiers truly wanted to react to their situations in order to reinforce an imagined self-image to their social group. Additionally, this work has also demonstrated the continued importance of tea and alcohol within the lives of British soldiers and its role as a bonding activity in society. The communal acquisition and consumption of which provided both a direct coping mechanism to provide a comfort from the more difficult aspects of frontline life and also worked as social currency, allowing men to interact with the social structures that developed on the frontlines of Korea. Additionally, accounts have also shown how postal communication was a very important element in soldier's social routine and how it allowed society in Britain to remain connected to soldiers on the frontlines. The methods of communication home and their respective importance to both soldiers and their loved ones in Britain formed an important part of the wider social experience, which the army encouraged. The post not only provided a social lifeline to families and friends, but its arrival prompted an opportunity for communal gathering as well. The importance of post as a social tool in Korea both emphasises the ways in which elements of society, such as following sports and family connections, influenced everyday life in Korea, as well as challenging the concept that Korea was a remote and isolated war.

Lastly, this work has also shown the extent to which the post-war experience of British soldiers has been overshadowed and neglected, both in their own time and

in retrospect. This work has analysed veterans' own accounts and provided a first-person view of the process of the Korean War becoming forgotten by wider society. As has been shown, the Korean War was already overshadowed by the Second World War at the time of its conclusion. British society remained apathetic to Korea and the experience of its veterans throughout the post war years. Given what this work has shown, it is perhaps unsurprising that even Bill Speakman, once paraded through his home town, fell upon the hardships he did. As indicated by the accounts in this work, it would appear that Bill's situation was far from unique, as many veterans of fighting in Korea found similar difficulties readjusting to life as civilians. Many faced the consequences of untreated social disorders symptoms of what would be today classified as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Similarly, many veterans suffered from horrific and violent nightmares for years and even decades after the war's end. These issues only compounded social difficulties and isolation for many veterans, which in turn led many to alcohol and substance abuse. This all occurred without any formal support structures or assistance available outside of family and friends. Lastly, this work has also shown the importance of veterans associations and similar organisations to individuals' experiences in the post-war years. Through organisations such as the BKVA, veterans were able to not only defy, but also reclaim the narrative of the Korean War and its participants being forgotten. This is evidenced by both veteran's own accounts and their own body of published works, which allowed them their own say in commemoration of Korea. The final point this work has covered is with regards to veterans' opinions of having fought in the conflict and how revisiting Korea has shaped their view of the war. the effect of revisiting Korea was profound for many veterans, who having had little care for their initial reasons to go to war. Whilst many at the time of their deployment saw Korea as an isolated and

meaningless war, with nothing to do with British interests, revisiting has allowed them to see the difference their actions helped to make retrospectively. Having seen that their actions were indeed meaningful and the efforts of fighting were not in vein, most veterans of Kore were much happier for it.

As the 70th anniversary of the Korean War draws near, the conflict seems more distant and remote than ever. Over 80,000 British soldiers served and fought in Korea for a cause many did not understand or accept at the time.⁴ 1109 of these men were lost or killed in action.⁵ Despite Korea's moniker as a 'forgotten war', this work has shown that through the memories, recollections and works of these men, there is ample evidence and material available to recentre the experience of soldiers as individuals to their rightful and important place in the conflict's histories and to shed light on wider British Society of the 1950s. Similarly, this research has shown through individual accounts just how Korea came to be 'forgotten' though its interactions with the popular memory of British Society and how veterans were highly aware of society's regard for them. More than that however, this thesis has been able to use the recollections of veterans to shed light onto both these men's own experiences and highlight how 'the forgotten war' has become an intrinsic part of how British Society interacts with the concept and experience of Korea. The ways in which society 'forgot' influenced how veterans framed and remembered their own experience. These soldiers made their own narratives, woven against the flow of popular memory. This shows that they were not merely notes on a map or footnotes to the campaigns of the conflict, but rather that they are the forbearers of the memory Korean War, more so than society's memory and are deserving of

⁴ Anthony Farrar- Hockley, *The British Part in the Korean War, Volume II, An Honourable Discharge*, (London, 1995), P. 420.

⁵ *British Casualties in the Korean War*, (Archived), [<https://web.archive.org/web/20090105162147/http://www.uk.or.kr/wargrave/>], last accessed 11th November 2018.

their place now recentred in the narratives of the war. In turn this may help bring studies of the Korean War more into line with the wider body of new military histories and potentially allow the conflict to become a more major part of studies of Twentieth Century warfare. This builds upon the work of others done in the same vein of thought regarding soldiers' experience and opens the door for an even greater understanding of the most significant conflict of the early post-war era, as well as a wider understanding of conflict throughout the Twentieth Century.

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